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Julia Morris

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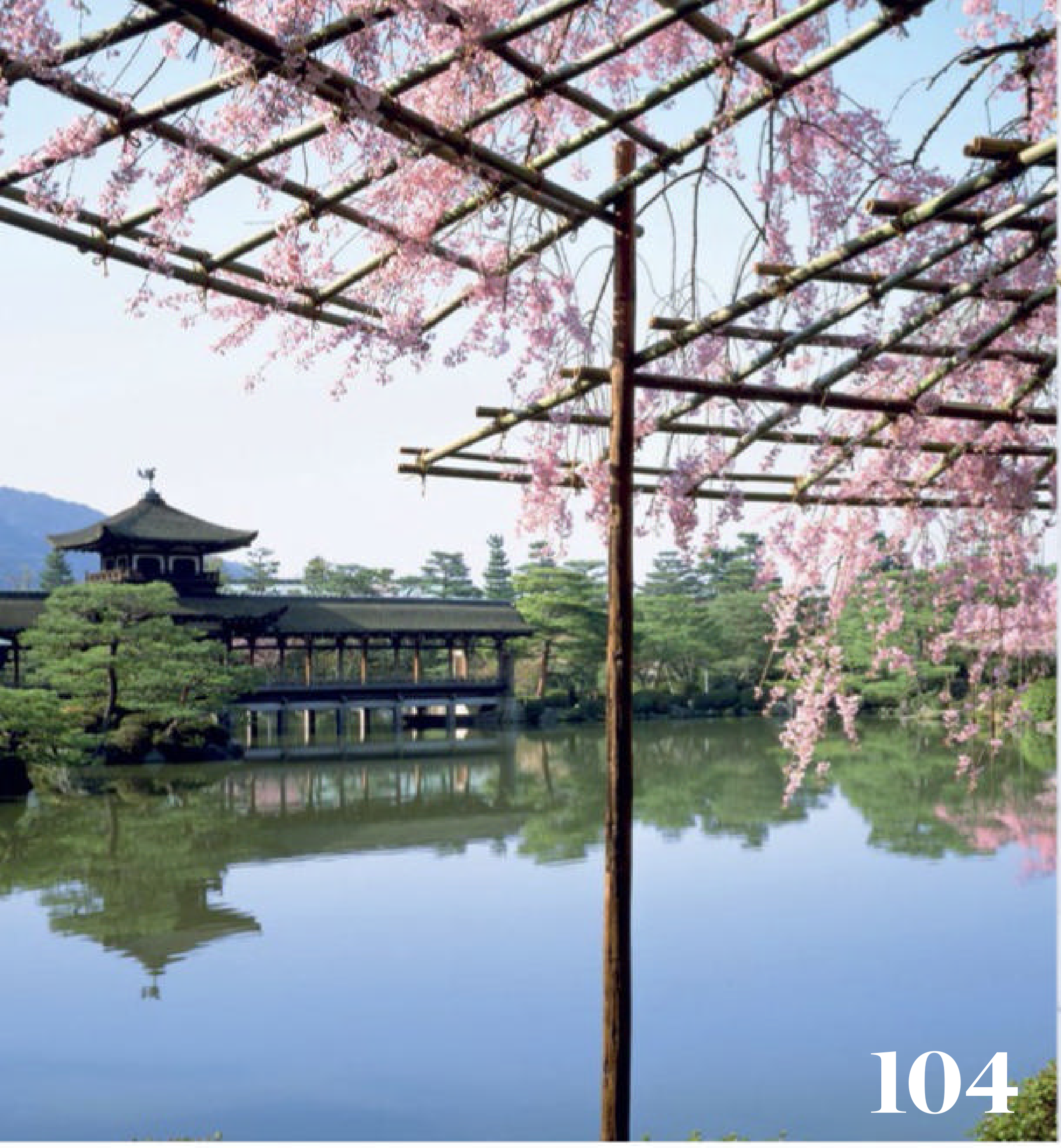
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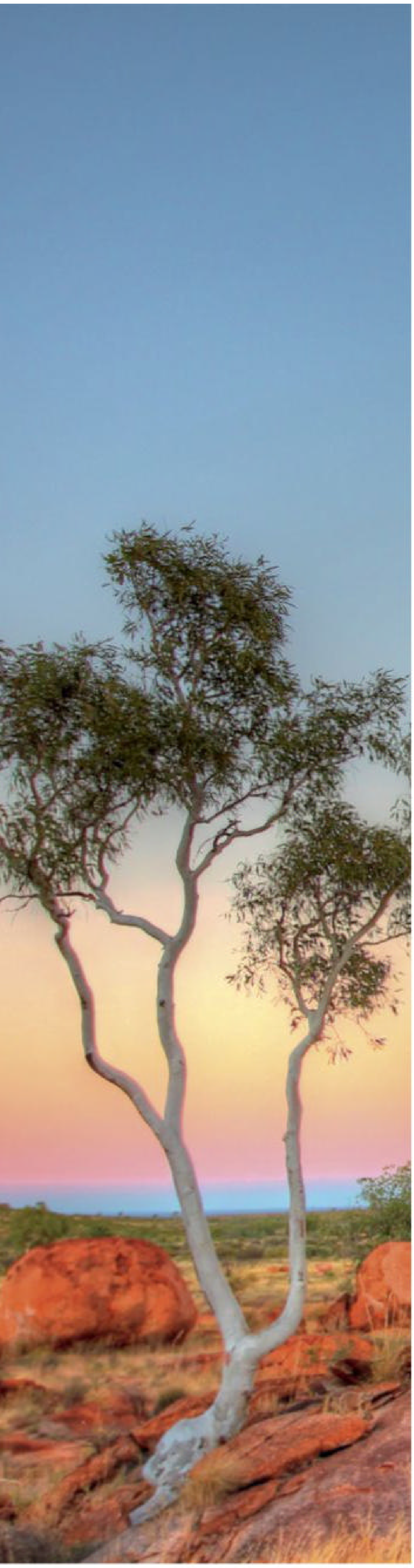

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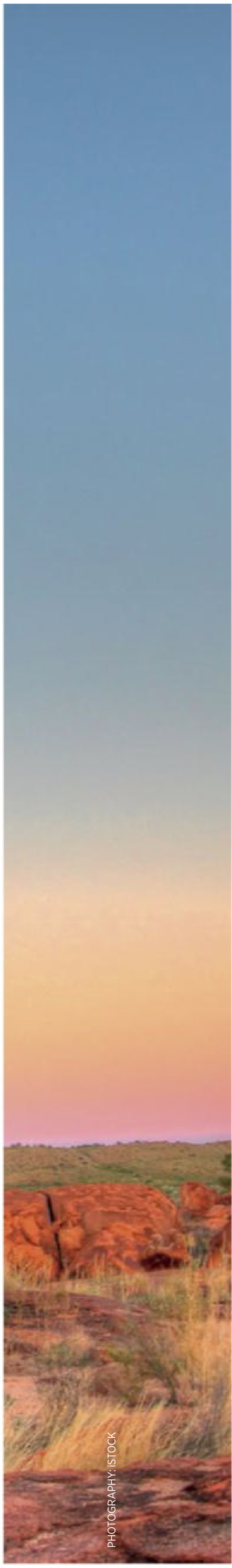
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On good behaviour

Recently, Australian habit scientist Dr Gina Cleo joined me on our podcast, *Thriving in Menopause*, to discuss how to break bad habits. It was fascinating to hear about her research and, as a fresh year begins, I remind myself of one of the most intriguing nuggets of advice she gave: Every habit has a 'trigger' – another behaviour that it goes hand in hand with. For instance, sitting in a car triggers you to put your seatbelt on (well, for most of us!). And you can see how such deeply ingrained habit triggers happen without you even being aware of them. So, if you want to nix a bad practice, the best place to start is with identifying the trigger. Dr Cleo has found that a common one among her clients is sitting on the couch, watching TV and reaching for either a glass of wine or a favourite snack. (Dr Cleo, you've found me out!) Interestingly, something as simple as sitting in a different chair to watch TV can help alleviate the urge to graze.

As Dr Cleo observes, every time you perform a bad habit, you're reinforcing it further. And so it's worth remembering that, whenever you resist the urge, you're helping diminish it as a habit. Looking to shake a craving – perhaps for sugary snacks? Try our three-week plan on page 74. It's not a diet (we know that 'diets' don't have lasting success) – instead, you'll find lots of helpful insights and strategies from experts, including Dr Cleo, to help you satisfy that sweet tooth the healthy way.

Also in this issue, Lyndi Cohen, aka 'the Nude Nutritionist', has a powerful story about body image (on page 98). "You don't need to have a cellulite-free tush or washboard abs to be healthy," she says. It's an apt quote to describe our core-toning exercises (on page 68), which have been specially created to help you feel strong and powerful, and not to fit an impossible ideal.

I hope 2023 is off to a positive start for you and that this issue provides you with plenty of tools, pointers and inspiration to live your best life!

Andrea

ANDREA DUVALL
EDITOR

PHOTOGRAPHY (MAIN): JEREMY GREIVE

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Treat yourself to *Prevention*'s popular hair and skincare beauty box **for just $99**!

See page 43 for details.

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this *or* that?

We asked for your views.*
Here's what you said.

Q WHAT KIND OF TEA DO YOU PREFER?

48% **ENGLISH BREAKFAST ALL THE WAY!**

27% *Green tea helps me focus*

5% I CAN'T GO TO BED WITHOUT A CHAMOMILE TEA

(20% other)

Q DO YOU PREFER AN ONLINE OR IN-PERSON CLASS?

59% *I like my time away from the screen*

41% ONLINE – I PREFER THE FLEXIBILITY

Q WHAT'S YOUR FAVE FOOD TO EAT WHEN YOU'RE STRESSED?

52% *Chocolate - there's no other answer!*

29% **A BISCUIT, CAKE OR PASTRY DOES THE TRICK**

12% I ALWAYS FORGET TO EAT WHEN I'M STRESSED

7% I'LL SNACK ON NUTS OR SOMETHING HEALTHY

Q IF YOU COULD GO ON HOLIDAY RIGHT NOW, WHERE WOULD YOU GO?

57% *Overseas to another country*

34% **EXPLORING AUSTRALIA SOUNDS EXCITING**

9% I'M IN THE MOOD FOR A STAYCATION IN MY STATE

*Results sourced from polls conducted on *Prevention*'s Instagram @preventionaus

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Pulse

MORE JOY, LESS STRESS – FOR A HEALTHIER, HAPPIER YOU

> You don’t have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.
>
> Martin Luther King Jr

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

GOOD SENSE OF RHYTHM

A pretty melody is a delightful thing, but did you know that learning to play a musical instrument can actually improve your brain's ability to process sights and sounds, and even lift a blue mood? A new UK study has found that adult beginners who took piano lessons for just an hour a week over 11 weeks became much better at recognising audio-visual changes in their environment, and also reported less depression and stress, compared with pre-training levels. This improved 'multisensory process' has benefits for almost every activity you engage in, from driving a car to crossing a road to finding someone in a crowd. Listening to music didn't have the same effect as actually playing, so it's time to dust off that old guitar!

3 SOUL-INSPIRING INSTAGRAM FEEDS WE LOVE ... *and you need to follow*

Mind is invisible nature, while nature is visible mind.

—FRIEDRICH SCHELLING

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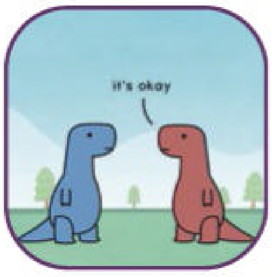

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Finnish writer James and Canadian artist K's webcomics of dinosaurs dealing with the ins and outs of mental health provide uplifting cheer on cloudy days.

what if...
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really amazing
happens?

@happynotperfect
Need a boost on those days when nothing seems to go your way? This mental health and mindfulness app offers gentle reminders you're worth taking care of.

Prevention AUSTRALIA *Book Club*

THE HOPE DEALER
Follow Your Breath
Transform yourself through breathwork
BRIONY BENJAMIN
LIFE IS TOUGH
BUT SO ARE YOU
THE JOURNAL

INSPIRING GOOD READS

The Hope Dealer

By Caitlin Cady
(Affirm Press, $35)
Add a dose of inspiration to your day with this treasure trove of wit, warmth and wisdom from meditation and yoga teacher Caitlin Cady. Whether you need to ditch self-doubt or get in touch with your resilience, you're sure to find the guidance you need.

Follow Your Breath

Emma Power & Jenna Meade
(Hardie Grant Books, $26.99)
This beautiful book introduces the reader to practical breathing techniques suited to different situations, and offers step-by-step instructions to help you unlock this life-transforming health hack.

Life Is Tough (But So Are You) The Journal

Briony Benjamin
(Murdoch Books, $24.99)
A follow-up to cancer survivor Briony's bestselling book of the same name, this guided journal aims to help you navigate curveballs and rise to the challenge when things go pear-shaped. Use on its own or as a companion to the book.

Scan the QR code to find these great reads and many more of our handpicked favourites at Booktopia.

WORDS: DONNAY TORR. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Health

THE BEST BREAKTHROUGH SCIENCE, MADE SIMPLE

DRY CLEAN

Ah, January, a month spent atoning for festive season overindulgence, only to be derailed by the celebratory libations of Australia Day. If this sounds like you, never fear: the growing popularity of a 'sober curious' lifestyle makes it easier than ever to source delicious alcohol-free alternatives without feeling deprived. Here are four great reasons to give your body (and mind) a break from the booze this month:

- Better sleep with an additional five to six REM cycles a night
- More hydrated, better-looking skin with increased cell turnover
- Improved memory and concentration
- Less anxiety and feeling happier (alcohol is a depressant)

So, why not jump on the wagon – the ride is amazing!

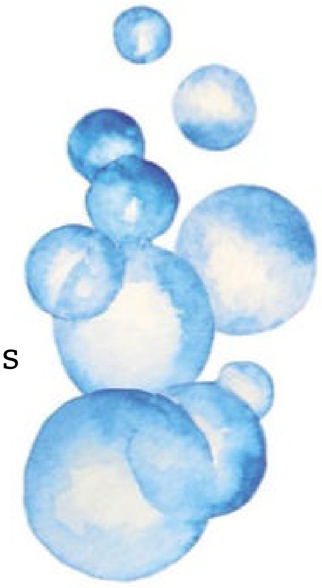
WORDS: DONNAY TORR. PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF PREVENTION US

SMOKED FRIES

Can't say no to that extra helping of French fries? It might not be your willpower that's to blame, a US study, published in the journal *Addiction*, suggests. Researchers implemented criteria used in reporting tobacco addiction and applied it to highly processed foods, like potato chips, cookies and fries, and found that these snacks were just as addictive as cigarettes. Similar to nicotine, all those refined carbohydrates and added fats trigger intense cravings, compulsive use, change the way you feel, cause changes in the brain and are highly reinforcing. So, perhaps adjust the way you view these tempting foods and focus on being addicted to eating healthily instead!

Pop music

Perhaps not the sweetest sound to many ears, but cracking your knuckles does not, in fact, cause arthritis. This is because the noise isn't caused by bones or joints rubbing together, but rather a gas bubble that forms between the bones and 'pops'. So, crack on with it!



76%

The percentage of women over 40 who get up to go to the bathroom at least once a night.

SOURCE: NATIONAL CENTRE FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY INFORMATION

Sipping away

Common compounds found in green tea and red wine may reduce the formation of Alzheimer's plaques in the brain, a promising new US study has found. Researchers used a 3D neural tissue model to test the effects of 21 different compounds on Alzheimer's-afflicted neural cells. Green tea catechins (antioxidants) and resveratrol (also found in grapes, blueberries, cranberries, peanuts, pistachios and cocoa) were found to have a robust positive effect on plaque regression, and didn't cause any harm. Further research could focus on enhancing these compounds, or making them more efficient at penetrating the blood-brain barrier, to help prevent mental decline in the future.

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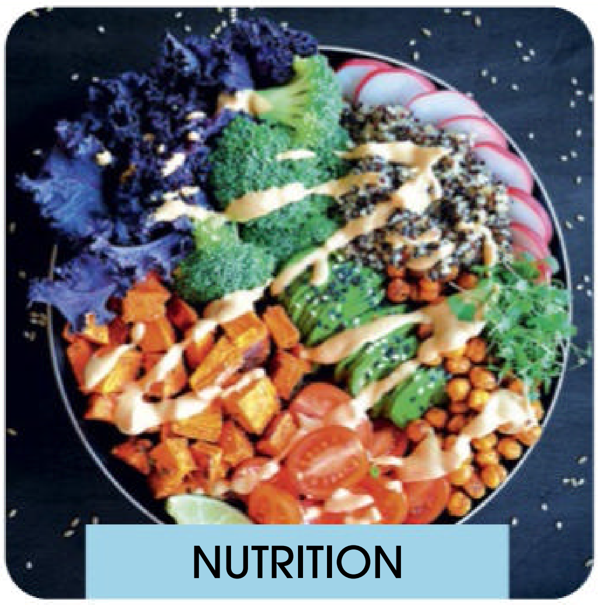


MINDFULNESS

The most popular articles you don't want to miss:

Try these yoga moves to alleviate a bloated belly

Why your hot flushes may not be a sign of menopause

Learn which foods help support a happy gut

Read more

find us at preventionaus.com.au

30-second health boosters

Improve strength, immunity and more with these four quick actions.

1 UNRAVEL TENSION

Feeling tense around your shoulders and neck? Try this super-fast stress reliever from nutritionist Dr Marilyn Glenville, author of *The Natural Health Bible for Women*. "Standing, lean forward and hold the elbow of your opposite arm with each hand for 30 seconds. You'll notice your breathing becomes deeper and tension is released across your shoulders and neck. Now slowly roll yourself back up and feel the tension wash away."

2 REV UP YOUR METABOLISM

Just before the end of your shower, turn off the hot tap and stick it out for 30 seconds. Studies have found that the cold water helps increase your metabolism, circulation and immunity.

3 GET AN IRON UPGRADE

Feeling fatigued on a regular basis? You're likely low in iron. An easy fix is to add a squeeze of lemon to iron-rich greens. "The vitamin C in lemon helps you absorb the iron and it adds to the flavour," says nutritionist Shona Wilkinson. Try it with broccoli, spinach and kale.

4 STAY BALANCED

Balancing exercises help to improve strength and flexibility, so try to slot one in every day. "I do it when I'm on the phone or cleaning my teeth," says physiotherapist Sally Roberts. Try Sally's move: Stand tall and lift one foot off the floor to see how long you can hang on to your balance without tipping over. Newbies should aim for 30 seconds on each leg, but keep trying daily until your time improves – it will!

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

sweat talker

Whether it's from working out, feeling embarrassed or that stinking-hot day, sweating is something we all do – but usually try hard to avoid. Here, we answer your burning questions.

BY TESSA HILTON

Q WHY DO WE SWEAT?

A Your core temperature needs to be kept at around 37°C, and sweating is the body's main thermostat-regulating mechanism. As sweat evaporates from your skin, it has a cooling effect. Sweat glands are found in areas with hair follicles, such as armpits, and only become active after puberty. Anxiety, stress or fear trigger the fight-or-flight hormones, which activate your sweat glands. More pleasurably, sexual arousal triggers a similar response.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Q WHY DO WOMEN SWEAT MORE DURING MENOPAUSE, AND WILL THIS CONTINUE IN LATER LIFE?

A If you're ever drenched in sweat during a hot flush, this is due to low oestrogen disrupting the body's temperature control. About 80 per cent of menopausal women experience these sweaty moments, but they usually disappear within a few years. In fact, as you get older, you tend to perspire less in general, because your sweat glands shrink.

Q *Does more sweat mean more smelliness?*

A While sweat doesn't smell, it does contain fatty acids, lipids and other substances that the naturally occurring bacteria present on your skin feed on. It's this process that is responsible for body odour. Thankfully, you can remove any stinkiness when you wash or by using deodorant that contains antiseptic, killing bacteria.

……

Q *Is it true that you can 'sweat out the toxins' in a sauna?*

A "Calling a sauna session a 'detox strategy' reveals a misunderstanding about how the human body works," says Sarah Everts, author of *The Joy of Sweat*. "Your kidneys are responsible for detoxification; they're the organ devoted to ridding your blood of chemical contaminants." That's not to say a sauna session isn't beneficial, though. "Having a good sweat can certainly rid you of toxic emotions, thanks to the release of feel-good hormones," she says.

Q CAN DEODORANT STOP YOU FROM SWEATING?

A No. Deodorants simply mask odour, but antiperspirants are different: they temporarily block sweat pores, preventing wetness as well as odour.

……

Q **Do men sweat more than women?**

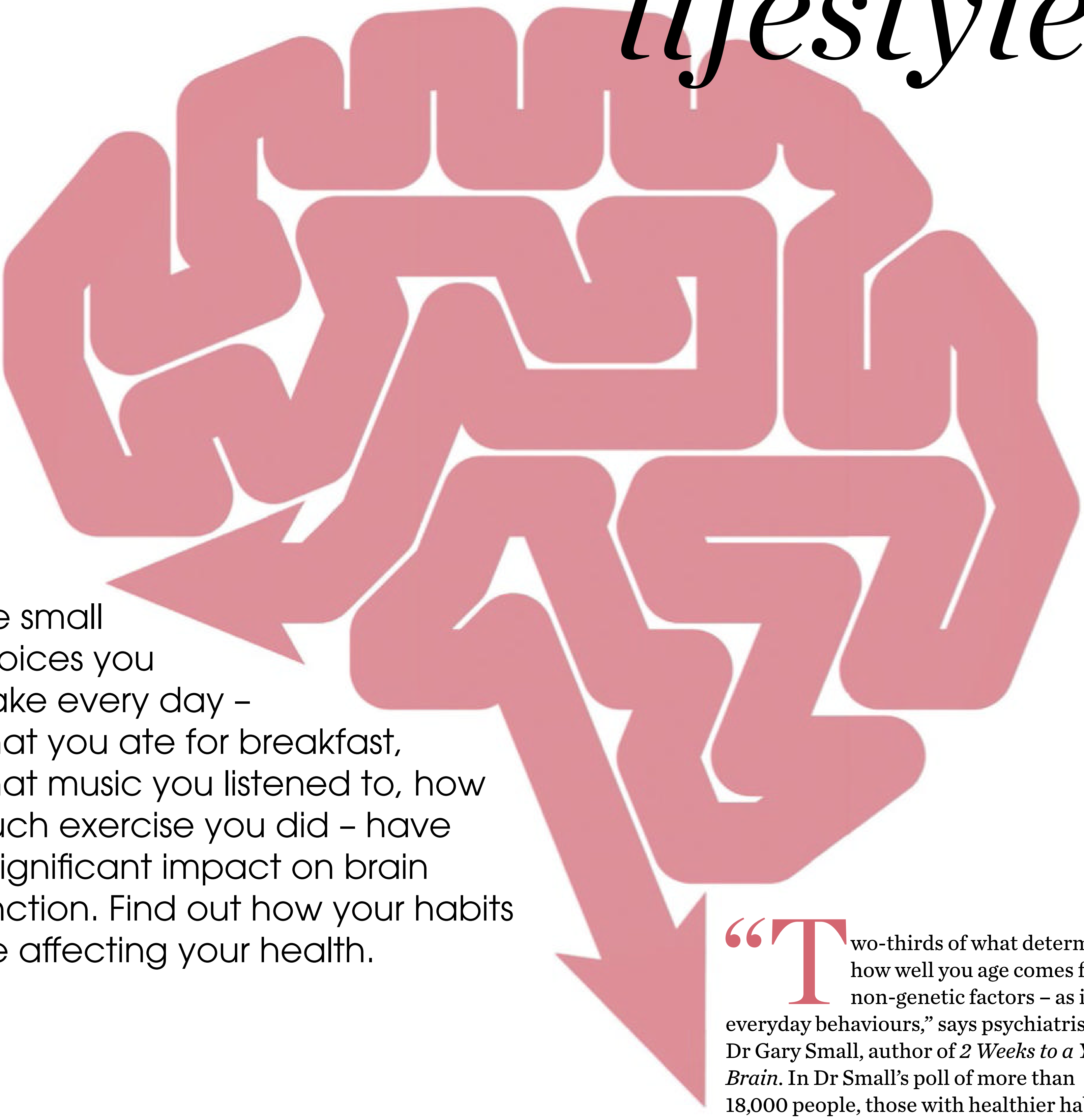
A "There's little evidence to support major sex differences in sweating," says Sarah. "Many of those reported can be attributed to other factors, such as body size, aerobic capacity or exercise intensity."

> *Surprisingly, fit people sweat sooner during exercise due to their more efficient heat-regulating system.*

Q WHAT CAN HELP MY SEVERE SWEATING?

A Hyperhidrosis, or excessive sweating, is thought to affect 1 per cent of the population. But dermatologist Dr Adil Sheraz says the true figure is likely double that, as many people don't seek help. It's thought to be genetic, although the cause isn't known. The condition can make hands become so sweaty that it can be hard to hold a pen. Secondary hyperhidrosis is more generalised and occurs as a reaction to medication or another underlying medical condition. Antiperspirants can be used on specific areas and stronger versions can be prescribed. See your GP if your condition lasts more than six months, interferes with daily life, you have a family history of excessive sweating or you're taking medication.

Are you living a BRAIN-HEALTHY *lifestyle?*



The small choices you make every day – what you ate for breakfast, what music you listened to, how much exercise you did – have a significant impact on brain function. Find out how your habits are affecting your health.

"Two-thirds of what determines how well you age comes from non-genetic factors – as in, your everyday behaviours," says psychiatrist Dr Gary Small, author of *2 Weeks to a Younger Brain*. In Dr Small's poll of more than 18,000 people, those with healthier habits – a balanced diet, regular exercise – reported fewer memory complaints. And he's found that when people learn and use memory techniques on top of that, brain scans reveal changed neural circuitry and a measurable boost in memory. Which strategies are best for your brain? Take this quiz to find out.

1

If you're having trouble concentrating at work, what should you do?

A Organise your desk
B Eat a cookie
C Grab a cup of coffee

A Cleaning not only relieves stress, but also declutters your brain. When US researchers looked at task performance in organised versus chaotic environments, they found that clutter in your surroundings competes for your attention, decreases your performance and increases your stress levels.

4

What's the best thing to do before an important work meeting?

A Give yourself a pep talk in front of the mirror

B Catch up on gossip at the watercooler

C Browse online

B Chatting with coworkers temporarily increases your intelligence and improves decision-making skills, according to a study published in *Social Psychology and Personality Science.*

2

THE BEST PLACE TO STROLL?

A Through the local park
B In a foreign city
C On a treadmill

A Memory and attention improved by 20 per cent when people opted to walk in a park rather than in an urban environment, according to US research. Study co-author Marc Berman, a psychology researcher, says this is because nature has a calming effect, while busy surroundings overstimulate the brain.

5

Lifting weights does what to your brain?

A Damages brain cells

B Improves your memory

C Nothing

B Strength training for 60 minutes, three times a week, improves both long- and short-term memory, says a study from the journal *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise.*

3

HOW CAN YOU EXPAND YOUR BRAIN'S GREY MATTER?

A Cook more often
B Do some long division
C Learn a new language

C Breaking your familiar routine and exposing yourself to new situations can help you maintain a higher level of brain functioning, says psychologist Dr Keith Lyle. "If you're not exercising your brain, it's like when you're not using a muscle very much: your body doesn't put resources into that organ. It says, 'I don't need to, because I can get by with a relatively low level of resources here,'" he explains. This can involve learning a new language, reading different books or simply taking an alternate route home.

6

WHICH OF THESE FATTY FOODS ISN'T A BRAIN BOOSTER?

A Salmon **B** Margarine **C** Egg yolk

B Eggs and fatty fish are full of brain-healthy nutrients, but the trans fats often found in artificial spreads can damage brain activity, found a recent study in the journal *Nutrition.* ►

7

Which of these drinks can hurt your memory?

A Green tea *B* Fruit juice *C* Water

B Can't remember where you put your keys? Blame the added sugar packed into your glass of orange juice. A study, published in the journal *Neurology*, found that elevated blood sugar levels are damaging to both your long- and short-term memory.

8

TRUE OR FALSE:

THE MORE ORGANISED YOU ARE, THE EASIER IT'LL BE TO REMEMBER YOUR WALLET

TRUE Good organisation and memory go hand in hand. If you consistently put things in the same spot, then you won't have to waste time trying to remember where you put them. For instance, when your wallet always goes in the top drawer of your dresser and your gym bag always gets stashed behind the laundry door, finding them is a no-brainer. Bonus: You'll free valuable storage space in your brain for more complicated recall-related tasks.

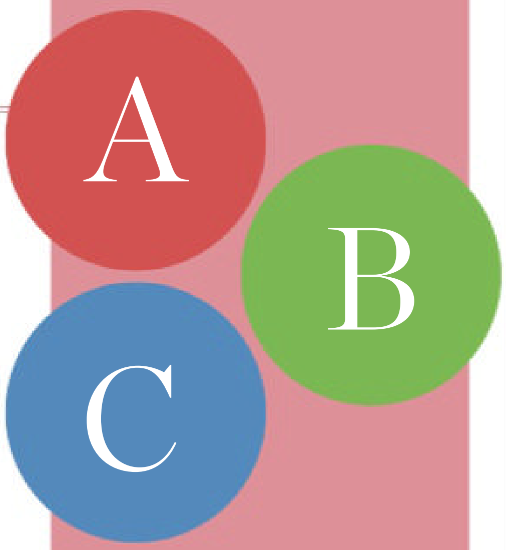
9

TRUE OR FALSE: Loneliness increases your chances of dementia

TRUE A Dutch study found that people who describe themselves as lonely are more likely to develop the degenerative brain disease dementia. In fact, the busier your social life, the better you are at decision-making recall.

10

Which of these colours boosts your creativity?



C Canadian researchers found that blue triggers feelings of freedom and tranquility, through associations with the sky and ocean.

11

Putting a plant on your desk can boost productivity by…

A 5% **B** 23% **C** 12%

C Any plant – even a fake one – will increase your efficiency and output by 12 per cent, says a US study.

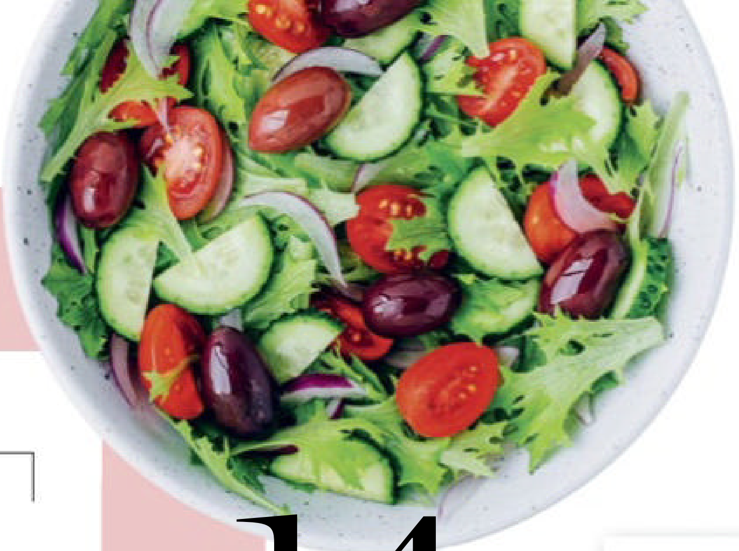
12

TRUE OR FALSE:

YOUR SHORT-TERM MEMORY IS LIMITLESS

FALSE

"You can hold only a certain amount of information in your short-term memory before it's full and you have to kick something out," says Ruth Curran, author of *Being Brain Healthy*. Do yourself a favour and group several items into one unit whenever possible. After all, trying to remember 10 ingredients is more difficult than simply remembering that you want to make your favourite tacos. So, instead of going to the supermarket and thinking, "tomatoes, salsa, cheese, shredded lettuce, olives, beans, etc", consider tacos as one unit and you should be able to recall all the components as you walk through the aisles.



13

HOW CAN YOU REMEMBER A MEANINGFUL MOMENT?

A Take a picture
B Talk about it
C Both A & B

C "If you want to really remember a meaningful moment, try to incorporate as many senses as possible while it's unfolding," Ruth says. For instance, if you're cooking with your grandmother and you don't want to forget the day, pick up a lemon and inhale the scent. The next time you want to elicit that memory, a whiff of a lemon may take you back there. Or, say you're going on a romantic walk on the beach with your partner and you want to remember and cherish the experience. "Pick up a pebble and hold it in your hand. The next time you see and hold the pebble, it'll be a visual and tactile trigger for that memory," she says.

14

WHICH OF THESE LUNCHES CAN HELP STAVE OFF MEMORY LOSS?

A Fruit and yoghurt
B Red meat
C Green salad

C Apparently, your mum and dad were onto something when they nagged you to eat your greens. These provide essential nutrients, like protein, iron and fibre, but they're also good for your brain. Research published in the journal *Neurology* says that eating one to two servings of leafy greens a day improves your memory and overall cognitive ability.

15

Which type of music boosts your brain power?

A Rock **B** Pop
C Classical

C Listening to classical music benefits the brain at any age, found a Finnish study, published in the journal *Scientific Reports*. "By affecting dopamine pathways, music silenced the genes that are risk factors for dementia," explains lead researcher Dr Irma Järvelä.

16

Which of these is the quickest (and easiest) way to improve your IQ?

A Going to the gym every day
B Reading a different newspaper
C Taking an online class

B Changing your newspaper or preferred news website once a month can add three points to your IQ, found a US study. This is because it alters your reading style and causes you to reevaluate, question or mentally justify your beliefs.

17

TRUE OR FALSE: The best way to remember something is to say it out loud

FALSE It's easier to remember things when you write them down. Dr Lyle stresses the importance of using diaries, calendars and notepads to enhance your memory.

18

WHERE SHOULD YOU PUT YOUR MOBILE PHONE SO YOU DON'T FORGET IT?

A On the kitchen table
B Next to your bed
C In your shoe

C Using visual cues can help you remember where you put things – or to pick them up so you don't forget them. Let's say you often forget your phone when you leave the house. While it's easy to bypass the bedside table on your way out the door, you can't leave the house without putting shoes on your feet!

PHOTOGRAPHY: iSTOCK

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Fitness

FEELING STRONGER, FITTER AND FIRMER AFTER 40 STARTS HERE

Step on it

Want to lower your risk of dementia, heart disease and cancer? Clocking up 10,000 daily steps is a good way to do it, according to two new studies in the medical journal JAMA. Researchers analysed data from more than 78,000 midlife people and found that this magic number of steps a day was associated with a 50 per cent lower risk of dementia and a steady decline in cancer and cardiovascular disease risk. Didn't quite get your 10,000 steps in today? The good news is that the study also found that a faster walking pace was linked to decreased disease risk. So, build up those steps throughout the day or speed things up by incorporating power walking or sprints into your regular stroll.

WORDS: DONNA TORR. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

LOWDOWN ON MUSCLE

Did you know that when you sit down, you're actually doing exercise? A recent study, published in the *European Journal of Applied Physiology*, found that the 'lowering' part of lifting a weight (yourself) does more work to make you stronger than lifting: other examples include walking downstairs or lowering into a push-up or squat. Four groups (one control) of participants had to perform either lifting and lowering, just lifting or just lowering resistance exercises twice a week for five weeks. The just lowering group increased their muscle strength and thickness the most. So, set up that resistance machine for lowering, focus on the lowering part when lifting weights or simply head downstairs!

25%

The percentage of women who don't work out as intensely as they could because of breast bounce.

SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH

Jog memory

Always misplacing your keys? A session of HIIT might stir your memory! A new US study has found that HIIT (high-intensity interval training) is connected with improved spatial memory (recalling physical things, like locating a landmark or keys). Meanwhile, light to moderate activities, such as regular walks, were found to enhance episodic memory (remembering details of everyday events). The science behind it? Exercise improves memory by helping the brain create new neural pathways in different parts of the organ, and this new nuance could be applied to designing specific exercise regimens to improve cognitive performance and mental health.

Moving it aside

Physical activity is more powerful than we realise. How so? Women who did regular exercise before their breast cancer diagnosis and after treatment were less likely to have their cancer return or to die compared with those who were inactive, a recent US study found. This is good news for those women who think their prognosis is out of their hands.

WORDS: DONNAY TORR. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Q What should I eat *before, during and after exercise?*

A How you fuel yourself can make a big difference both in your workout and your recovery. Follow these guidelines from dietitian Amy Fischer.

BEFORE Go for rapidly digested carbohydrates, your main energy source, ideally one to two hours prior to working out. Limit fatty and high-fibre foods, because these take longer to digest.

THINK: A banana, a couple of dates or roasted beetroot, alone or with some low-fat ricotta.

DURING Hydration is key at this time. However, if you do get hungry, go for something light that'll help replenish the glycogen you're burning.

THINK: Water every 10 to 20 minutes, or – if you're exercising for more than an hour or at a very high intensity, or you perspire a lot – an electrolyte-replacement drink (look for a low-sugar version). A bite of fruit or low-fat yoghurt should satisfy a grumbling tummy.

AFTER Post-workout is when you'll want to refuel with a mix of carbohydrates and protein to replace glycogen stores and for muscle recovery, ideally within one to two hours of exercise.

THINK: A smoothie with extra protein and fruit; a snack of apple or banana with a tablespoon of nut butter; or a sweet potato with chicken or salmon.

Myth:

You must wait at least 30 minutes after eating before swimming.

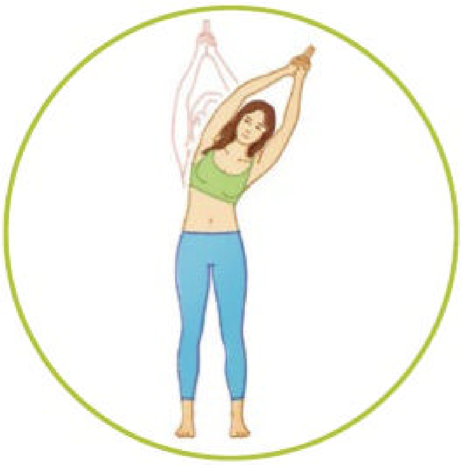
Not true, so go ahead and jump right in! "People used to believe that, after you ate, blood flow would be diverted from the extremities to the gastrointestinal system to help you digest food, which would lead to cramps," says orthopaedic surgeon Dr Peter Wernicki. "In reality, the most common cause of muscle cramping while swimming is overexertion – going too fast, too hard or too long." In short, you have lots of blood to let you digest and swim at the same time. P

PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF WOMEN'S HEALTH US

MOVE OF THE MONTH...

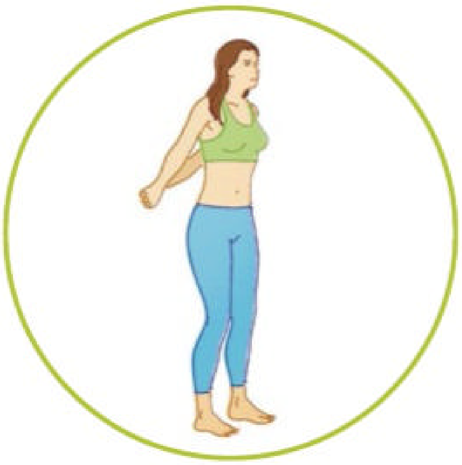
3 stretches TO SUPERCHARGE YOUR BRAIN

Need a pick-me-up? These yoga poses will refresh your mind and restore flagging energy by getting oxygen flowing, improving your posture and opening up your chest and the sides of your body.



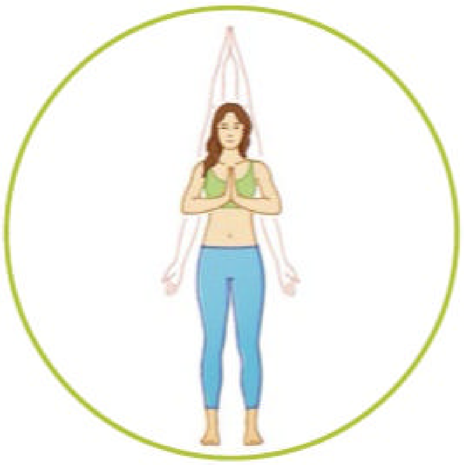
STANDING SIDE LEAN

Step 1 Stand tall with feet hip-width apart and thigh muscles engaged. Sweep arms up to the sky and interlace fingers except for your index finger and thumb. Gently hug arms towards your ears.
Step 2 On an inhale, press feet into the floor and stretch up and out to the left; let breath inflate your right-side ribs. On an exhale, draw belly in, press feet down and return to centre. Repeat on right side. Do four reps.



STANDING CHEST OPENER

Step 1 Stand with feet hip-width apart, thigh muscles engaged and interlace fingers behind lower back.
Step 2 Stretch and expand your chest and shoulders by contracting back muscles. Keep your neck relaxed throughout – just imagine collarbones rolling back to look up at the sky.
Step 3 Enjoy three long breaths in this position, then release.



STANDING SUN BREATH

Step 1 Stand tall with feet hip-width apart and thigh muscles engaged. Let arms dangle by your sides.
Step 2 On an inhale, gradually sweep your arms out and up to the sky until palms meet above your head in a pointed position.
Step 3 On an exhale, lower your hands to your chest. Repeat for 10 breaths.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK. ILLUSTRATIONS: COURTESY OF PREVENTION US

Water cooler

Swap sweltering pavements for water-based fitness with these fun updates to your workout kit.

FOLLOW SUIT Add a cute sarong to this super-comfortable swimsuit and you're all set. **Sea Level Cabana Twist Bandeau One-Piece, $139.95, and Sunset Frayed Sarong, $44.95, sealevelaustralia.com.au**

made by Fressko

SIP IT UP Keep your drink chilled (or hot) with this insulated infuser flask. **Fressko Core 1L Flask + Sip Lid, $89.90, au.madebyfressko.com**

speedo
speedo

BAND AID Improve stability during water aerobics with this stylish buoyancy belt. **Speedo Aqua Belt, $55, theiconic.com.au**

CAP IT OFF Add a bit of quirk to your morning laps with this cute llama swimming cap. **Vorgee Miss Glamour Cap, $13.99, vorgee.com**

THE NORTH FACE

BUCKET LIST Keep your days footloose and sunburn free with this fetching bucket hat. **The North Face Recycled 66 Brimmer Hat, $70, thenorthface.com.au**

STAR POWER Laze around on this eye-catching inflatable. **Verao Glitter Fusion Swim Ring, $14.99, rebelsport.com.au**

DRY SEASON Shake post-swim shivers with this comfy beach towel. **Sheridan Seabay Beach Towel in Iced Aqua, $74.99, sheridan.com.au**

LUNCH BAG Take your picnic anywhere with this handy backpack kit. **SunnyLife Luxe Picnic Backpack, $199.99, sunnylife.com.au**

SAFETY ORANGE Keep your feet supported, cushioned and grippy with these all-rounder kicks. **Reebok Nano X2 Fitness shoes, $200, reebok.com.au**

GAME, SET, MATCH Play the day away with this compact beach tennis set (includes carry case). **SunnyLife Foam Beach Bats, $49.99, sunnylife.com.au**

COMPILED BY DONNAY TORR

Fast fact

A 30-minute hula hooping session burns 690 kilojoules (165 calories). Not bad for a 'child's activity', right?

SOURCE: MAYO CLINIC

EXERCISES TO TAKE FROM THE PLAYGROUND

You mightn't have realised it back then, but all those playtime activities you did as a child were actually giving you a good workout. Here are three fun moves that'll do just that.

Can you remember the last time you did a cartwheel? Or skipped, jumped or climbed without counting reps or glancing at your fitness tracker (or looking to see if anyone was watching you)? And, yet, children do it all the time, joyfully springing around being active, with no self-consciousness in sight. Maybe it's time to embrace your inner child and reframe workouts as playtime. These fun activities all improve your heart health, burn kilojoules, increase stamina and boost your mood, too. Plus, they help develop your core strength for better balance and posture.

Hula hooping

This is a really good low-impact cardio workout as well as an endorphin-boosting activity. Exercise physiologist and nutritionist Kathleen Alleaume suggests a weighted hoop (66fit.com.au has a good selection) over a non-weighted one as it's easier to control and keep spinning for longer. "The heavier the hoop, the more resistance, but also the higher the risk of injury, so start lighter if you're a beginner," she advises. "Position your feet slightly wider than your shoulders, keep your core engaged throughout and move your hips in a circular motion to keep moving."

WHY WE LOVE IT

1. It strengthens your core muscles, upper legs and buttocks
2. It improves joint mobility
3. It's a low-impact cardio workout

Skipping rope

Something you once did so effortlessly can be fun again. "It's important to find the right rope length, so step on the rope and make sure the handles reach your armpits," says Kathleen. "As you skip, jump on the balls of your feet and don't get frustrated if you trip – that's common. Choose between short, intense sessions with complex skills at a higher speed, and longer, low-intensity sessions at a lower speed with more rests."

WHY WE LOVE IT

1. It's a high-intensity interval workout
2. Jumping boosts bone mineral density
3. It improves agility, flexibility and hand-eye-foot coordination.

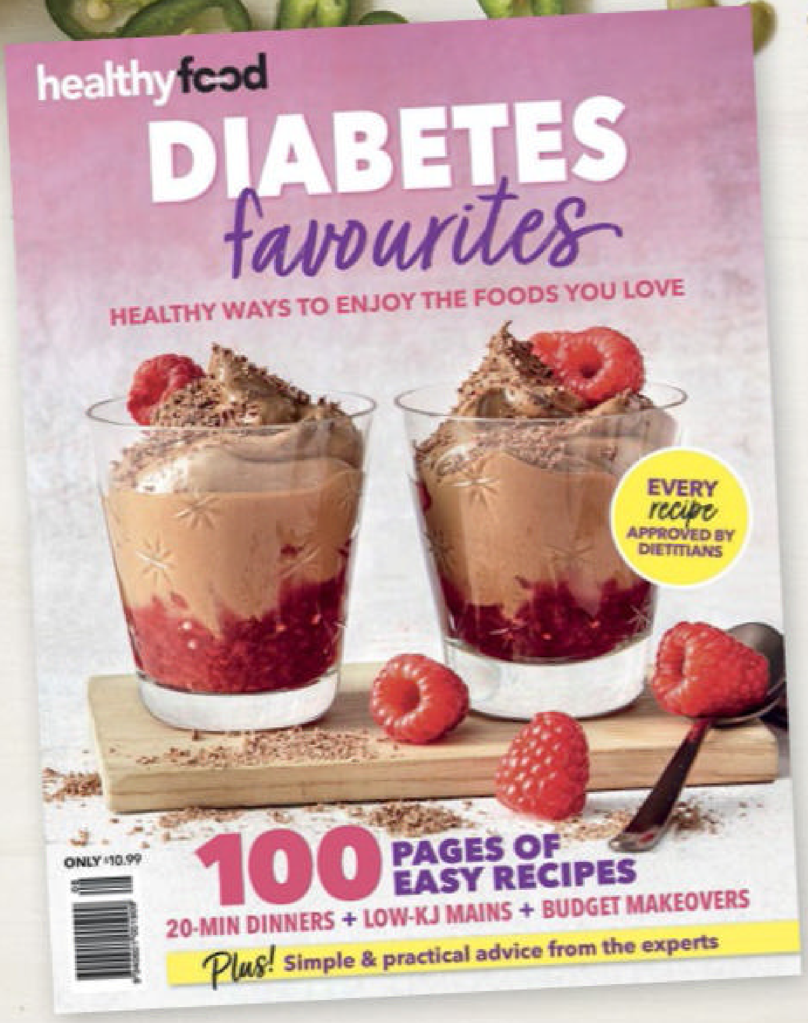
Trampolining

"Jumping on a trampoline is low impact, so it's kind to your bones and joints, and it's a good way to boost your fitness endurance and strengthen your cardiovascular health, as well as relieve stress," says Kathleen. She recommends a mini trampoline with a handlebar (catch.com.au has a bunch to choose from), which is useful for beginners. "Start with basic movements, such as jumping jacks and jogging on the spot, and ensure your weight is on the balls of your feet, not your heels. And keep your back straight, too."

WHY WE LOVE IT

1. It strengthens your core muscles
2. It works out your lower body
3. It's a great heart-pumping, cardio workout

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK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Nutrition

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Colour correction

Here's another reason to eat the rainbow: Digging into more brightly coloured fruit and vegies can help prevent visual and cognitive loss in women, according to a recent US study. It's all thanks to the pigment carotenoid – found in vividly hued produce, such as sweet potatoes, spinach, watermelons, capsicum, tomatoes, oranges and carrots – which has been found to directly improve function in specific tissues of the eye and brain and also help prevent central nervous system degeneration. Why is this news so important for us? The study, which reviewed and analysed data from previous studies, found that women account for nearly 80 per cent of all autoimmune diseases, which attack healthy tissue. So, get your fix today by making up a tropical fruit salad or stir-frying your own mix of colourful vegetables!

WORDS: DONNAY TORR. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Berry good eyesight

A handful of goji berries a day may keep the optometrist at bay, a recent US study suggests. These little globes of goodness are high in compounds lutein and zeaxanthin, which provide protection from light damage and age-related macular degeneration. In the study, researchers compared the density of these protective pigments in the eyes of healthy people aged between 45 and 64 after 90 days of consuming either a 28g serving of dried goji berries or a commercial eye supplement five times a week. They found that the berry group saw a significant increase in the pigments, with no changes noted in the supplement group. To reap the benefits, add some goji berries to your favourite trail mix or simply eat them raw.

91%

The percentage of parents who say their families are less stressed when sharing a meal together.

SOURCE: AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION

Rumbling on

You may not have heard of borborygmi, but you've definitely experienced it. This weirdly melodic word is the medical term for that tummy rumble that always seems to rear its head during quiet moments, like work meetings or yoga sessions. Usually, we associate the mutterings of our innards with hunger, but borborygmi is actually caused by gas percolating its merry way through your gut, a by-product of intestinal bacteria dealing with the contents of the digestive system. Usually, borborygmi is a sign that things are working as they should. But, if the gurgles are accompanied by symptoms, such as abdominal pain, nausea or bloating, then check in with your GP.

Long black

Your coffee habit could help you live longer. A new study, published in the *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*, found that two to three cups a day (whether it's ground, decaf or instant) was associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease and death. Cuppa, anyone?

WORDS: DONNAY TORR. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

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Foods that keep you young

The stuff you eat can have profound effects on both your longevity and quality of life, so dig into these delicious picks to keep you sharp, fit and having fun!

BY ALYSSA JUNG

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

For a sharp brain

BLUEBERRIES These tiny fruits are so packed with anthocyanins (antioxidants) that they've become the berry of choice in brain research. "A growing body of scientific evidence is examining how blueberries can support brain health, and recent studies suggest they may help ward off cognitive decline," says dietitian Frances Largeman-Roth.

WALNUTS This wrinkly nut harbours a slew of brain benefits. In one study, consuming walnuts helped adults perform better on tests of memory and concentration, likely due to their polyphenols and polyunsaturated fat. Another study found that women were less likely to have memory issues after the age of 65 when they ate at least two servings of walnuts per week during the prior decade or so.

QUINOA Wholegrains like quinoa, brown rice and oats are rich in B vitamins, which research suggests can help guard memory. Bonus: B vitamins also help your body use all the other nutrients you consume more efficiently.

To move well

YOGHURT Yoghurt is an especially smart dairy choice, letting you spoon up plenty of calcium and protein for strong bones, joints and muscles.

SALMON Protein supports strong bones and is essential to building and maintaining muscle mass, and this fatty fish also boasts inflammation-zapping omega-3s, which have been shown to have a positive effect on joints in people with rheumatoid arthritis.

HERBS AND SPICES These natural flavour boosters have anti-inflammatory properties and can be especially helpful in easing joint pain and stiffness. They also provide antioxidant compounds for overall health and wellbeing.

For good vision

EGGS Their yolks are filled with vitamin A, lutein and zeaxanthin, which help protect vision and prevent age-related eye diseases. Choline supports good eyesight and may protect against glaucoma, while "vitamin D can improve and help prevent age-related macular degeneration," says Frances.

CAPSICUMS All colours contain several eye-beneficial nutrients: vitamins A and C as well as other antioxidants like quercetin, lutein and zeaxanthin. Vitamin C may help lower the risk of cataracts and other vision problems.

PEANUTS These crunchy guys are packed with vitamin E, which helps prevent the breakdown of eye tissue; this may reduce the risk of vision problems. They're also filled with healthy fats that can help lower 'bad' LDL cholesterol.

For a strong heart

LEGUMES Whether you are a chickpea loyalist or you prefer a bowl of lentils, eating pulses helps keep your heart healthy. "Legumes, like beans, are naturally high in fibre, which binds to cholesterol particles in the intestines," explains dietitian Laura Iu. "So, instead of entering the bloodstream, where it can harm your heart, it's excreted."

EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL "The combination of unsaturated fats and antioxidants helps decrease total cholesterol and protect blood vessels from inflammatory damage," says dietitian Jackie London.

SPINACH It's abundant in magnesium, "a mineral that's strongly linked to cardiovascular disease prevention," says Frances. It plays a role in regulating blood pressure, blood glucose levels and more. Spinach is also a source of calcium, which helps regulate blood pressure and support healthy heart function.

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by Naturopath Meah Robertson

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Beauty

FAST, EASY WAYS TO LOOK AS GOOD AS YOU FEEL

Power cycle

Looking to make your skincare work even more effectively? 'Skin cycling', coined by New York dermatologist Whitney Bowe, may be the answer. The whole idea is that you give your skin recovery days in the same way you do your muscles after exercise. Skin cycling is a regular, four-night skincare routine that alternates nights of applying active ingredients with rest and recovery. The result? Minimised irritation, a strengthened skin barrier and improved appearance. Skincare is never a one-size-fits-all approach, but if you want to see what skin cycling can do for you, then here's how to do it:

NIGHT 1: Exfoliate
Use an acid (like Dr Dennis Gross Alpha Beta Universal Daily Peel, $25 for five, mecca.com.au) to slough away dead skin cells and wake up glowing. Exfoliation aids penetration of your active ingredients for night two.

NIGHT 2: Apply retinoids
Choose a vitamin A product (like No 7 1% Pure Retinol Night Concentrate, $69.99, Priceline), which will boost your collagen and elastane production and increase skin cell turnover. Retinoids can be irritating, though. So, if you have sensitive or reactive skin, pick a lower concentration to help your skin acclimatise.

NIGHTS 3 AND 4: Recover
Avoid all actives. It's all about recovery, hydration and barrier repair now. Use only hydrating products (like Ego QV Ceramides Moisturising Cream, $22.99, Chemist Warehouse) that have nourishing ingredients, such as hyaluronic acid, squalane or ceramides. Repeat this four-night cycle regularly for healthy, radiant skin.

WORDS: CECILY-ANNA BENNETT. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

68%

The percentage of Aussie women who are unaware that using a hairdryer on full heat can cause irreparable damage.

SOURCE: DYSON

Q&A

WHAT'S THE EASIEST WAY TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY-LOOKING TAN?

Forget dangerous UV rays to get that golden glow – you can do it safely with the new generation of fake tanners, which deliver streak-free, even coverage and a natural-looking sun-kissed hue (no orange sheets, too!). And even if you make a mistake, tan erasers (such as ModelCo Tan Remover Exfoliating Soap, $10, Chemist Warehouse) mean you can bronze without fear. Grab a tanning mitt and try these picks:

SUNESCAPE GRADUAL TAN EXTENDER A self-tanner, tan extender and moisturiser in one that leaves zero streaks, gives a gradual sun-kissed colour and is rich in coconut, macadamia, avocado and argan oils and tocopherol (vitamin E), a powerful antioxidant that soothes irritated skin. **$33, sunescape.com.au**

TAN-LUXE THE WATER This fast-drying liquid develops into a radiant glow in two to four hours, with no streaks or fake-tan smell. Plus, it's enriched with nourishing vitamins B, C, E and raspberry seed oil. **$64, adorebeauty.com.au**

SISLEY SELF TANNING HYDRATING FACIAL SKIN CARE Intensely moisturise your skin while infusing a natural hint of colour with this luxe, nourishing tan cream, which leaves a bronzed and radiant complexion. **$180, David Jones**

Ingredient alert:

CHIA SEEDS

Proving good things come in small packages, chia seeds are emerging as a powerhouse ingredient in skincare. Rich in nourishing fatty acids, their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties help to moisturise, soothe and protect your skin. Good in a chia pot – and on your face! **Find it in:** Paula's Choice Omega+ Complex Serum with Chia + Flaxseed, from $14, paulaschoice.com.au

Making scents of it all

'Fragrance free' and 'unscented' may sound like they mean the same thing, but they don't. An unscented product may contain masking fragrances designed to stop it from smelling like anything, while fragrance free means that nothing has been added to adjust the aroma. "I don't think one is necessarily better than the other," says dermatologist Karan Lal. "It depends on your skin and what you react to." Quick tip: For sensitive types, fragrance free is the way to go.

WORDS: CECILY-ANNA BENNETT. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

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BY CECILY-ANNA BENNETT

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LA PERLA ENERGIZING SALTS AND OIL BODY SCRUB This luxurious scrub boasts nourishing prebiotics and moisturising oils. **$165, libertineparfumerie.com.au**

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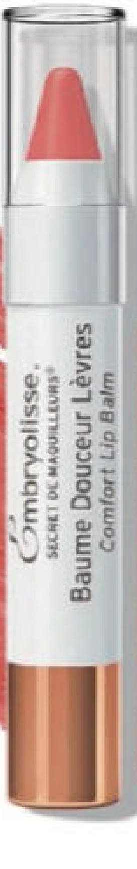
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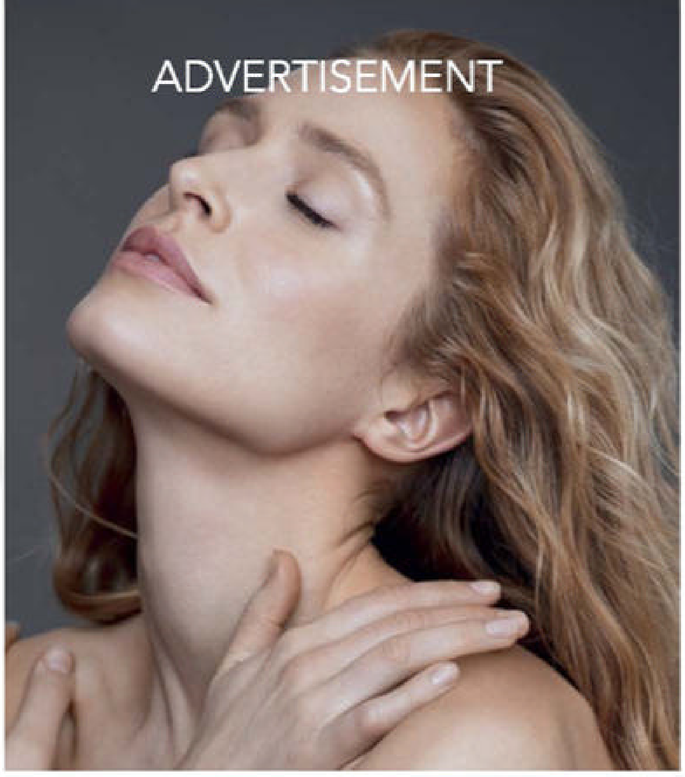

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New Nordic believes in the holistic approach, meaning that the first step, which is the most important step of all, is to focus on beauty from within. The Skin Care™ Collagen Filler is a tablet that provides nutrients to the skin from within for more beautiful skin. The tablet contains ingredients that aid connective tissue production and maintain skin health as well as the feeling of well-moisturised skin.

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Herbal Base. Natural Origin
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REDUCES THE APPEARANCE OF WRINKLES

The AWARD-WINNING Natural Magic™ Anti-Ageing Cream is a day-to-night face cream that is packed with magical ingredients, such as fermented pomegranate and astaxanthin, which contribute to firmer, younger-looking skin. It also contains sea buckthorn, apricot, sunflower and more incredible powerful ingredients. This velvety moisturising cream can reduce the appearance of wrinkles and leave the skin even and feeling firmer.

I achieved amazing results

For a long time, my facial skin has looked ruddy, stressed and dry. My eyelids bagged and had begun to sag. I was really depressed about my appearance. I have been through a gruelling time with many challenges and it has really affected my skin. It was stressed and dry in the T-zone. After I started using Natural Magic™ Anti-Aging Cream, my skin looked radiant. It feels amazing and soft. And the best part is that the bags around the eyes are completely gone – it's almost like magic.

Amazing face cream

I have previously tried other products from New Nordic, with great success. So, when I saw that they had launched a new skincare cream, I was in no doubt – I just had to try it. And I am happy and grateful that I did. The cream has an amazing, airy texture that I haven't seen before. It smells fantastic and is incredibly easy to use.

Beautiful soft skin

I have now used the cream for about a month and I look great. My skin is incredibly soft, I almost feel my face radiating and glowing. I get compliments on my skin. People think I look fresher and healthier. The best thing, though, is that my bags and wrinkles around my eyes are gone. It's unbelievable – I almost don't believe it!

Line, 40

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Lock keeper

Haircare has moved beyond treating just the scalp with new high-spec ingredients shifting the focus to boosting the health of hair itself.

Look closely at many of the new hair products available now and you may be surprised to see ingredients once synonymous with skincare. From thickening to hydrating hair, we show you which ones you need to look your best, plus share a few of our favourite picks to get you started.

FOR THICKENING…

Look for: COLLAGEN

Not simply a skincare fave, collagen is making its way into shampoos, too. It's welcome news for anyone with thinning hair, as collagen amino acids give a protein boost that strengthens hair from the inner cortex, outwards.

OGX BIOTIN & COLLAGEN SHAMPOO, $10.50, amazon.com.au

ESSANO LONG & STRONG COLLAGEN SHAMPOO, $15.99, essano.com.au

FOR COLOUR CARE…

Look for: ALPHA HYDROXY ACIDS

AHAs are widely used in scalp treatments but have hair-specific benefits, too. For example, lactic acid can strengthen bleached hair and trap dulling minerals that can compromise shine. The hair's natural pH is somewhat acidic, so acidic haircare can help restore balance after an alkalising colouring process.

SCHWARZKOPF PROFESSIONAL FIBRE CLINIX AHA VIBRANCY BOOSTER, $40, ozhairandbeauty.com

REDKEN ACIDIC BONDING CONCENTRATE SHAMPOO, $45, adorebeauty.com.au

FOR FIXING DRYNESS…

Look for: HYALURONIC ACID

Hyaluronic acid has a volumising effect on skin, but also "wraps around hair fibres to keep lengths and ends soft, smooth and plump," says Elisabeth Bouhadana from L'Oréal Paris. Just make sure you use it on damp hair, because "if applied to dry hair, it'll draw moisture out of the hair shaft rather than locking it in," she says.

L'ORÉAL ELVIVE HYALURON MOISTURE PLUMP SERUM, $21.99, Chemist Warehouse

RODAN + FIELDS DEFRIZZ+ OIL TREATMENT, $86, rodanandfields.com.au

FOR SMOOTHING…

Look for: HEMISQUALANE

A natural alternative to silicone, sugarcane-derived hemisqualane improves shine, texture and strength without weighing the hair down. It coats the strands, making hair less prone to breakage and split ends. It's biodegradable, too.

THE ORDINARY 100% PLANT-DERIVED HEMI-SQUALANE, $7.40, myer.com.au

JVN UNDAMAGE STRENGTHENING CONDITIONER, $32, sephora.com.au

WORDS: ANNA LAO-KAIN, MEDINA AZALDIN, EVE CAMERON, FLEUR TRUZZA & CECILY-ANNA BENNETT. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

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Antioxidants *explained*

These skincare wonders not only protect your skin from damage, they also give you a brighter, smoother complexion. Here are four you need.

BY SHANNEN ZITZ

The superheroes of the beauty world are the antioxidants in your creams and serums – if you're not using one already, you're missing out on some special powers. "Antioxidants are there to neutralise what we call free radicals," explains dermatologist Dr Mona Gohara. "Free radicals are essentially pesky little chemical particles that can wreak cosmetic havoc on your skin." Their effects can include fine lines, wrinkles, uneven skin tone and sagging skin.

All antioxidants help protect the skin from free radical damage, also called oxidative stress, but each has other specific skin benefits, too. And while many skincare routines involve multiple antioxidants, it may be helpful to focus first on products whose primary antioxidant will help with your specific skincare goals. Here's what's what.

TO BRIGHTEN: VITAMIN C

If your skin feels dull and uneven and you're looking for a brighter complexion or to combat a pigmentation-related skin concern, such as sunspots or acne scarring, then vitamin C is the antioxidant for you. It can bring radiance and glow to the skin as well as even out skin tone, says Dr Gohara. Vitamin C helps decrease melanin production to combat hyperpigmentation, increase collagen production and even protect skin from UV rays. It's commonly found in formulations along with vitamin E, as the two ingredients stabilise each other for better results. Search for a formula with a vitamin C percentage of between 10 and 20 per cent, ideally paired with vitamin E or another antioxidant.

OUR PICKS **La Roche-Posay Pure Vitamin C10**, $71.95, adorebeauty.com.au; **Synergie Skin Effica C Essential Vitamin C Serum**, $125, synergieskin.com

TO SMOOTH: VITAMIN A

Retinol and retinoids, which are derived from vitamin A, are game changers when it comes to collagen and elastin production. These are "the number one anti-ageing ingredients" recommended by experts, says dermatologist Dr Morgana Colombo. Vitamin A products work in two ways: They increase skin cell turnover, leading to an exfoliating effect, and they also promote collagen and elastin production, helping to reduce fine lines and wrinkles and create more even skin tone and texture. Other benefits include decreasing UV-related damage to skin and preventing further such damage, and it works best in conjunction with a hydrating moisturiser. Vitamin A can cause a little irritation for the uninitiated, so introducing it gradually into your skincare routine is the best approach. Use just twice a week at first and then, if your skin can handle it, every two days, before increasing frequency to nightly. To smooth and rejuvenate your skin, look for products with a label that lists 'retinol' or 'vitamin A', or seek out a prescription retinoid from a dermatologist.

OUR PICKS **Dr LeWinn's Private Formula Vitamin A Rejuvenation Cream**, $49.95, Chemist Warehouse; **Aspect Retinol LGS+**, $79, adorebeauty.com.au ►

> The natural levels of hyaluronic acid in your body decrease [over time], so topical application then becomes even more important.

TO SOOTHE:
NIACINAMIDE

If inflammation or irritation is your concern, opt for a niacinamide-based product. Dr Gohara says that it has much better anti-inflammatory abilities than other antioxidants, which makes it perfect for those with conditions like acne or rosacea or with sensitive skin overall. Niacinamide (a form of vitamin B3) also calms sensitive skin by hydrating, strengthening the skin barrier and supporting the production of ceramides, essential building blocks of skin; this allows skin to retain water and look healthy and smooth. Look out for products that have 'niacinamide' or 'vitamin B3' in the top portion of their ingredients list.

OUR PICKS **Paula's Choice 10% Niacinamide Booster,** $70, paulaschoice.com.au; **Olay Luminous Niacinamide + Vitamin C Moisturiser,** $59.99, Chemist Warehouse

TO HYDRATE:
HYALURONIC ACID

This antioxidant helps keep skin in peak health because of its unique ability to attract water into skin and maintain optimal hydration, which supports skin cells. Hydrating with hyaluronic acid reduces the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles. Plus, when skin is healthy and hydrated, skin cell production increases, creating a softer, smoother, more radiant look. The natural levels of hyaluronic acid in your body start to decrease as early as your 20s, so topical application then becomes even more important. Opt for products with 'hydrating', 'hyaluronic acid', or 'sodium hyaluronate' in their ingredients list.

OUR PICKS **Nip + Fab Hyaluronic Fix Extreme4 Concentrate 2%,** $44.99, Priceline; **StriVectin Rehydrate + Replump Hyaluronic Dual-Response Serum,** $122, adorebeauty.com.au

ADDITIONAL WORDS: CECILY-ANNA BENNETT. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES; ISTOCK

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MODEL IMAGE

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If you're feeling exhausted and in need of revitalisation, you should consider a detox or cleanse. With Active Liver™, you have the tool to do this gently and on a daily basis.

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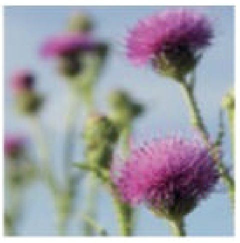
Unjunking YOUR BODY

A detox, like a water or juice fast, is an excellent way to rid the body of stored toxins, but it is often difficult to abide by, and involves days or even weeks of feeling tired and sick. However, there are other ways.

Detox WITH ONE TABLET A DAY

Active Liver™ is a dietary supplement that helps promote a healthy liver, aids digestion and helps you detox on a daily basis – all year round. With just one tablet a day, it gently but effectively uses known herbal extracts to facilitate detoxing of the body – without the side effects.

Active Liver™ by New Nordic contains **MILK THISTLE**, a herb known for protecting the liver and reducing heavy metal toxicity.



It also has **TURMERIC**, a superfood and one of the most anti-inflammatory and protective anti-oxidants known.

Finally, Active Liver™ uses globe **ARTICHOKE**, a plant used for centuries for increasing bile production. Bile is used to bind and flush toxins and fats from the body.

THE LIVER AND YOUR WAISTLINE

The liver is an important fat-burning organ. If the liver is sluggish or clogged with waste material, it can start building up around the waistline and even inside the internal organs (which may lead to a fatty liver). Making sure your liver is working well will help you flush fats from the body.

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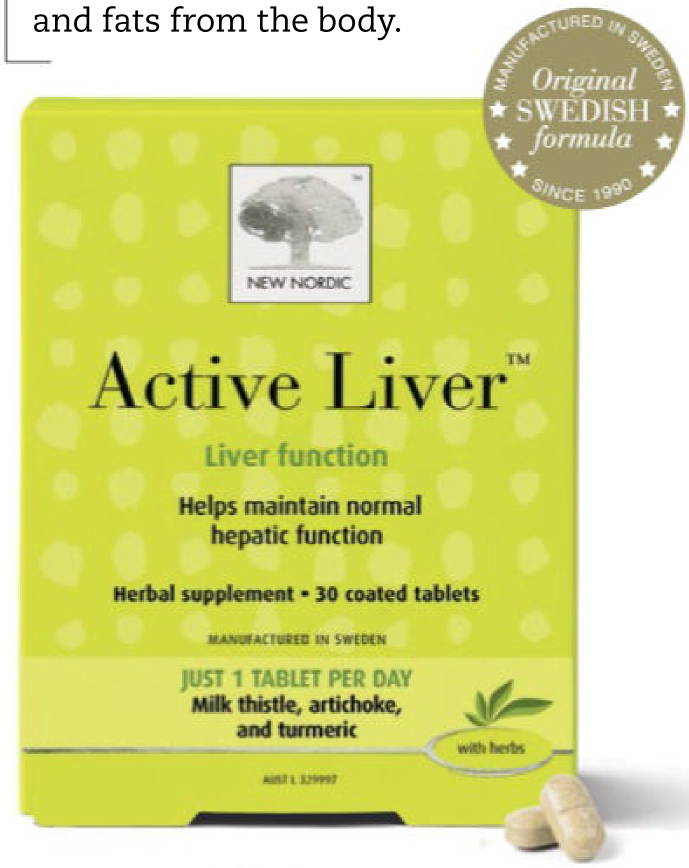
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Mind

SMART WAYS TO STAY SHARP, CALM AND POSITIVE

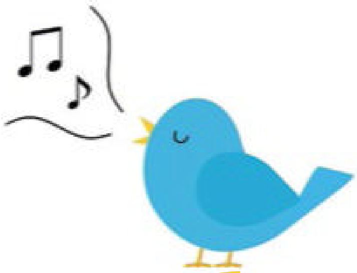
I THINK I'M TIRED

Turns out 'mental' gymnastics can exhaust you just as much as the real kind, a new French study has found. Researchers compared the brain activity of people doing hard mental tasks over a workday with a group doing simpler duties and found that intense thinking over several hours led to a build-up of the amino acid glutamate in the part of the brain responsible for cognitive control, or thinking. This excess impacts other brain work, such as making decisions. No wonder we're more likely to say yes to that third piece of chocolate cake closer to the end of our thinking day!

WORDS: DONNAY TORR. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

THE MAGIC WORDS

'Thank you' – they're small yet mighty words, which are vital for thriving relationships, according to a new US study. Researchers surveyed the relationship satisfaction of couples over a 15-month period and discovered that pairs who felt appreciated by their significant other were more satisfied and less likely to think about separating. Perceived gratitude also buffered participants against the stress of issues, like financial pressures or arguing with their partner. Giving genuine compliments and checking in with a partner's needs helps, too. Time to tap into the power of appreciation!



6 minutes

The time it takes for the sounds of birdsong to have a positive effect on your mental health. Tweet-tweet!

SOURCE: SCIENTIFIC REPORTS

Split decision

We apologise for busting this popular myth, but… creative thinkers aren't 'right-brained', and neither do analytical minds lean left. Instead, it's more complex, neuroscientist Dr Stephen Kosslyn explains. Brain structure and function vary between people, making a simple left-right division too blunt to capture the brain's wonders. So, why does the theory endure? It has its roots in experiments with split-brain patients, and persists, in part, because dichotomies (like left/right hand capabilities) are easy to grasp, says Dr Kosslyn. That sounds right… or is that left?

Tidy sum

Feeling unfocused? Take 10 minutes to tidy up. Research has found that a messy environment can make it difficult to complete tasks and even impact your mental health negatively. Decluttering not only gives you a sense of accomplishment, but also improves your mood, helps reduce stress and boosts productivity.

WORDS: DONNAY TORR. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

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Thanks for the joy

How simple gratitude can bring on lasting happiness and positivity.

Looking for a new good habit to add to your routine this year? Here's an easy one that science says can lead to big benefits: feeling grateful each day. Studies show that having appreciation for things on a regular basis can help lower stress levels and blood pressure, resulting in a boost of happiness. Here are a few expert tips on how to find a little more gratitude and joy in your day.

TRY MORNING MINDFULNESS

"One of my favourite things to do is wake up and reflect on three things I'm grateful for, small or large," says neuropsychologist Dr Judy Ho. "If you get into the practice of doing that every day, you'll see a shift in your outlook and how you view life."

CELEBRATE YOU

"The empowerment you receive when you're proud of yourself is a form of gratitude," says psychologist Dr Cheyenne Bryant. And this goes hand in hand with self-esteem. "You plant seeds in yourself that are weeds or wheat – weeds may be negative self-talk and wheat is embracing who you are. Assess what's growing and then focus on the wheat. Soon, you'll find that loving yourself and gratitude will come much more easily."

INDULGE IN SELF-CARE

This is an important step toward feeling grateful. "Rotate in at least one self-care activity daily," says Dr Ho. Tap into six areas: emotional (feel-good things), practical (things that prevent problems, like doing laundry), intellectual (challenging your mind), physical (stretching), spiritual (nature time or meditation) and social (connecting with others). You'll be feeling the joy in no time! P

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

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I HAVE ALWAYS DREAMED OF THICK-LOOKING beautiful hair

Annette, 47, has always been conscious about her thin hair. She used hair extensions to make her hair appear to have more volume. When her hair began to break and started falling out, she became desperate. “I looked for help at the hairdresser and at the health store. They recommended Hair Volume™ and now I don’t dare stop.”

For many years, I have been in a constant search for help. I was upset about my hair thinning and dreamed of beautiful thick and shiny-looking hair. I have tried everything as well as seeking help from my hairdresser. But when the hair started breaking, I became really desperate.

HAIR VOLUME™ TABLETS WERE RECOMMENDED TO ME

At my local health food store, I was recommended Hair Volume™ from New Nordic, as, among other things, it contains apple extract. I was advised to use the tablets for a minimum of three months. I went home full of expectation.

LOSING MY HAIR IS IN THE PAST

My skin was the first thing I noticed: there was a nicer glow to it. It’s a great extra benefit of the tablets. My husband was the first to comment on my hair. He could clearly see that I had a lot of new hair growth in the hairline. My hair is much more shiny and I don’t dare stop taking my Hair Volume™ tablets, Annette says happily.

Your hair tablet for normal hair growth and volume

Hair Volume™ is a Swedish hair tablet that supports hair growth. Biotin and zinc contribute to the maintenance of normal hair. The tablet combines apple extract with extracts from millet, horsetail plant and copper – natural sources for hair nutrition.

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Easy ways to MAKE HARD DECISIONS

Go from stalling to reaching a conclusion in just four steps.

BY LIZZ SCHUMER

These days, even deciding what to have for dinner can feel like a monumental task. So, tackling the big stuff – should I change jobs? Sell the house? End my relationship? – can seem downright impossible. There's a good reason for that: The stress and uncertainty of the past few years have left many of us with major decision fatigue. "Change requires mental energy, and these past few years have required constantly navigating change," explains Dr Rebecca Jackson, a specialist in cognitive behaviour. But, a few surprisingly simple steps can help make the route forward a little clearer, no matter where you're headed.

STEP 1

MAP OUT A PATH

One decision-making technique that author and life coach Anita Kanti teaches her clients is BRAVE, or Beliefs, Readiness, Alignment, Vision and Engagement. The philosophy behind this starts with creating 'benevoliefs' (a word she coined), or benevolent self-beliefs, to bestow helpful attitudes and assumptions. For example, someone contemplating a move to a new city should first believe they're capable of thriving in a new place (benevolief); think about the steps needed to make the jump (readiness); figure out who and what else will be affected by the change, such as family members, career and finances (alignment); try to picture what getting to and living in a new city would feel like (vision) and then, finally, if all that seems right, start working toward the move (engagement). "This way of thinking provides a road map for making decisions," Anita explains.

STEP 2

AVOID BROODING

Brains aren't meant for multitasking, even though society celebrates it. Focusing on something in peace – whether that's reading a contemplative book, listening to a meditative podcast, journalling, taking a walk or talking to a friend – can help your brain focus on the decision at hand. Dr Jackson also likes what she calls "going breathless", or doing a few jumping jacks or lunges or another heart-pumping exercise to refresh and refocus. Finally, writing it out can help get your brain out of the stress loop that major changes can lock you into. "Your brain will rehearse and repeat," Dr Jackson explains. "Especially when you're stressed, you get stuck in a negative feedback loop." Writing helps get the tension out of your head and signals to your brain that it can stop ruminating. Jotting down a list of pros and cons also assists some people. That said, economist Russ Roberts cautions that the technique isn't particularly beneficial for decisions that have difficult-to-predict results, such as getting married or having kids. So, leave the pros and cons for issues that have less at stake. If you do opt for a positive/negative list, remember to include big-picture considerations, such as meaning, purpose and how the decision will affect how you see yourself.

STEP 3

PICK THE RIGHT TIME

If you've ever found yourself standing in front of the fridge in a daze at the end of a hard workday, you already know that timing matters when it comes to decision-making. Dr Jackson recommends structuring your day so you can make bigger decisions early on, when you naturally have more mental bandwidth. "As the brain runs out of reserves and resources, you drop down into lower-functioning brain networks," Dr Jackson explains. "That means functioning in the moment and having a hard time thinking and planning ahead." If you can, start your day with the items that need your full decision-making power instead of tackling the easy tasks first and working up to the more taxing ones.

STEP 4

CUT YOURSELF SOME SLACK

As both Russ and Dr Jackson point out, you can't predict how things will actually turn out, so don't stress over making the perfect decision. Whatever path you do choose will involve surprising factors you just can't plan for, and you'll have to negotiate as you go along. P

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

I'm genuinely the happiest I've been in a long, long time.

Julia Morris

With a new-found independence, a career that continues to sparkle and her inimitable sense of humour, the 54-year-old star is an unstoppable force for good.

BY CECILY-ANNA BENNETT PHOTOGRAPHY CAMERON GRAYSON

Julia Morris has undergone a transformation. If 2020 and 2021 were the wing-clipped years dominated by fear and uncertainty, diminished opportunity and domestic challenges, then 2022 was Julia's year of resurgence and she's risen as a fierce, fabulous and delightfully funny phoenix. In 2023, she has three new shows on the go. She's living life on her terms with joy and without restraint. And she's doing it all as a single mother to daughters, Ruby, 16, and Sophie, 14, after her long-term marriage to Dan Thomas ended 18 months ago. If there was ever a role model of a strong, empowered, independent working mum, Lady JMo, as she's affectionately known, is it.

TAKING THE REINS

"I'm genuinely the happiest I've been in a long, long time," Julia says. "There's a certain sense of calm that's come over me in these past few months and I'm feeling sensational. I'm just happy to wake up alive; to be a lot more organised, because I've gone from doing the work of one person to doing the work of two people. That's been its own adventure. But, in feeling happy within myself, I can deal with anything. It's not like last year when I would've been like, 'Argh, God! How do I do this?' I've gone from someone who couldn't do any flat-pack furniture to someone who'll force myself to read instructions and action them." It's obvious that Julia's new-found flat-pack prowess is about more than just furniture, but life itself.

"I haven't been the chef in my house for 20 years, so the kitchen has been added to my upskilling," she says. "I was always the cleaner, not the cooker. But, in the past few months, I've deleted all the food delivery apps off of my phone. And you know what? The second you make your own pizza instead of having it delivered, it's yummier. ►

> *When my marriage ended, I somehow ended up with the body of my dreams.*

"Same with making your own Bolognese sauce. I'm not a list keeper and I'm not that efficient with my time management, but that's what makes me roll through the day now: sorting things out. This past year and a half, I've had to completely change the way I do things. Let me tell you, every old dog is up to learning new tricks if you can wrap your brain around it!"

FEELING EMPOWERED

One thing Julia does have her brain firmly around is living without limitations. "When you have a partner, it's a world of compromise," she muses. "Now I'm living this brand-new life that doesn't include sharing it. I get up in the morning, no instructions. I go through the day, no instructions. I cook dinner, no instructions. This part of my life has been like, 'I didn't know I could do that!'"

Julia has transitioned into this new phase with a renewed sense of who she is, and the self-love she's feeling is plain to see. She's glowing from the inside out, looking svelte and it all comes down to happiness (and Pilates). "There's no revenge body; I don't feel any of that," she says. "There was no big blow-up [with Dan]; it was more of a drift apart. I did work hard trying to offload the 'COVID coat' I put on, but when my marriage ended, I somehow managed to end up with the body of my dreams. Maybe that's because I'm not hearing about it anymore. For me, it's not about the size of your waist. It's what's inside your head. That's what needs adjusting, not the measuring tape around your middle."

Julia's liberation has come replete with a spot of life spring-cleaning, too: setting boundaries, saying no and not succumbing to people-pleasing for the sake of it. "I've done a very big cleanse of my life, for sure," she shares. "I've cut down everything that I don't feel like doing. For instance, if I feel backed into a corner, if I have to do something, or if I've left something too late to not do it, I cancel it. I reject being shamed into things now. I reject having to do it because it's the right thing to do. It's all about the girls, the dog and me now – in that order."

BACK TO BUSINESS

Julia's career as Australia's beloved 'First Lady of comedy' is as illustrious as ever. Having performed for almost 37 years, the award-winning stand-up comedian, actor, TV presenter and author will be back on screens (and stages) in 2023, bringing the laughs to legions of Aussies.

In April, Network Ten will air the ninth season of reality series *I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!*, which will see Julia head back to Africa, this time with her daughters in tow (at least, for part of it). After a 15-month hiatus, it marks an exciting return for the show and a welcome reunion for Julia and her co-host Dr Chris Brown; their endearing banter is as much a reason to enjoy watching as the gag-worthy tasks endured by celebrity contestants.

Next up comes Network Ten comedy game show *Taskmaster*, adapted from the UK format of the same name. Hosted by Tom Gleeson, it's a bit like *The Apprentice* for stand-up comics, says Julia. Think ridiculous tasks and brain-bamboozling challenges, all designed to put funny bones to the test. "When I shot the tasks [for *Taskmaster*], I threw myself into it," she says. "I didn't care if I looked old or large. I let go of all the things that would've been hang-ups in the past and I ended up having an absolute ball. It really ignited some big fire in me." ►

JULIA WEARS (OPENING SPREAD) CABLE MELBOURNE SHIRT AND PANTS. REPLAY SNEAKERS. THIS PAGE: COCO & LOLA TEE. THE UPSIDE LEGGINGS. REPLAY SNEAKERS

Quick six for *Julia*

Top dinner hack?
Grab a pizza base, some tomato paste, a bag of mixed cheese and you have a margarita pizza. Or I make organic chicken soup, freeze it, defrost when needed and add some two-minute noodles.

Favourite snack?
Raspberry bullets – hands down.

Your go-to exercise?
Pilates. Lying down to do your exercise is the best kept secret!

Skincare tip?
I'm part of the (Trinny London) Trinny Tribe. #nonspon.

Guilty pleasure?
The Kardashians. I find them fascinating on so many levels.

What's your outlook for the year ahead?
I feel joy. There's joy coming in 2023.

> *You don’t understand how you’ll ever get through to the other side, but you do.*

BRINGING THE LAUGHS

In June and July, Julia is embarking on a national stand-up tour, *75 Years in the Business*, her first one-woman show in four years. If you ever wanted to experience Lady JMo at her most brutally honest, funniest self, then this is the moment. "There's nothing like a live performance," Julia says. "All bets are off. It feels like a super-private exchange between you and your audience. I mean, comics are pretty honest anyway – that's our stock and trade. We look at the tragedy of our lives and make jokes about it, in order to relate to the audience.

"It's like when I was talking about menopause and perimenopause [during her previous tour]," Julia says. "I had so many people after that tour come up to me and say, 'Oh, my God. Now my husband doesn't think I'm nuts anymore because he just heard you explain it.' Going through the menopause itself is its own nightmare. The storm starts and the cloud doesn't feel like it's ever going to shift. You don't understand how you'll ever get through to the other side, but you do and the sun comes out again. It's just not a really hot sun, so you don't have to deal with it."

Having been menopause free for about four years, Julia says it was an experience that gave her more clarity about the importance of good health and the privilege of ageing. "I think, in your 50s, you finally take your head out of the sand," she says. "You keep up your doctor appointments and make sure that, if there's anything to be detected early, you get onto it. Because it suddenly matters. I see my psychologist, I drink more water, I do Pilates, I try to do all the good stuff. I don't manage to succeed every day, but I just try again tomorrow."

It's evident that Julia's sense of calm will see her soar in 2023 and beyond. She's navigating the inevitable chaos of life with humour, warmth and a refreshing resilience, and has unflappable strength and composure. So, what's the secret to her enduring tranquillity? "I think it's being post-menopause," Julia says. "I think it's hurtling towards my mid-50s and no longer being told what to do and how to do it, and when to do it and why to do it. I'm a pretty strong bird. I always have been. But now I really am in charge of every waking moment of my life. And there's something incredibly freeing about that."

On with the show

REALITY BRIGHTS

Julia will be lighting up screens again in the new season of *I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!*, alongside co-host Dr Chris Brown.

75 YEARS IN THE BUSINESS

THE STAGE IS SET

The comedian is preparing to unleash her unique brand of humour in a nationwide stand-up tour, *75 Years in the Business*.

ED
EMMA
JULIA

CENTRE OF ATTENTION

With fellow comics on a recent episode of Network Ten's popular game show *Have You Been Paying Attention?*

FUR-VOURITE CHILD

With her gorgeous cavoodle, Kenny. "I've said to my children, 'I don't have a favourite'... (but) it's not entirely true," says Julia.

CABLE MELBOURNE TEE AND SHORTS. STYLING: MILANA DE MINA. HAIR AND MAKE-UP: LYNN WHEELER

HOW TO *argue* over

Got different values about religion, politics, whatever? There are healthy (peaceful!) ways to talk about them.

BY RELATIONSHIP THERAPIST RACHEL ZAR

When big differences over values arise in a relationship, it can catch you off guard. You may not have realised how important religion was to your partner until you had children, or you may not have seen the depth of your political differences until arriving at this fraught time of social upheaval. Can you navigate a relationship with someone who has different values? It depends on myriad factors, but these strategies can set you and your partner up for success.

1 SET BOUNDARIES

When couples realise they're on opposite sides of an issue, they may completely avoid that topic or fight about it nonstop. If these conversations need to happen (say, in order to make decisions about your current life or your future), the key is setting a time and space that has a beginning, a middle and an end – maybe even in a therapist's office. It also may be helpful to agree on times or spaces where you won't have this kind of debate. For example, "No discussions of hot-button issues after dinner." This will help create safe, relaxing periods where you can both connect.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

the BIG stuff

2 BE KIND

Follow the same rules that work for any other disagreement or conflict: Avoid name-calling or ridiculing and be kind to your partner throughout the process. Try your best to assume positive intent and get curious about why your partner feels strongly about the issue instead of trying to convince them that you're right. (They just may be the one who's in the right!) Giving up on the objective of changing your partner's mind will help you learn about where their convictions are coming from, and you may even notice similarities that you weren't previously aware of.

3 TAKE A BREATH

When you're debating something important to you, your nervous system can be flooded. Then, rather than being rational, you act impulsively or reactively and are at risk of dealing out low blows you can't take back. The reason? When something is a core part of your value system, a dismissal from a partner feels like a rejection of the essence of who you are – and this can be scary and put you on the defensive. So, monitor yourself: Are you unable to hear your partner's side of things? Do you feel out of control? Are you having physical symptoms of being upset (heart pounding, face flushing, muscles tensing)? Then it's time to temporarily step away from the conversation to calm your nervous system.

4 EMPATHISE AND MOVE ON

If you find that you can't agree, the goal needs to shift to empathy and understanding so you can put aside the discussion. This means you both need to be able to say, "I disagree, but I understand where you're coming from and your intent, and we don't need to continue having this conversation." It's more than just agreeing to disagree – it's about understanding why you have a difference of opinion so you can make peace with it. Then, look for some like-minded people – say, via volunteering for an organisation or at a meet-up event – who can support and share in your values. P

7 habits everyone SHOULD QUIT

By eliminating these negative patterns from your life and adopting positive new ones, you can boost your happiness and completely change your perspective.

BY ZEE KRSTIC

Old habit: HOLDING ON TO A GRIEVANCE

INSTEAD *Loosen your grip and just let it go*

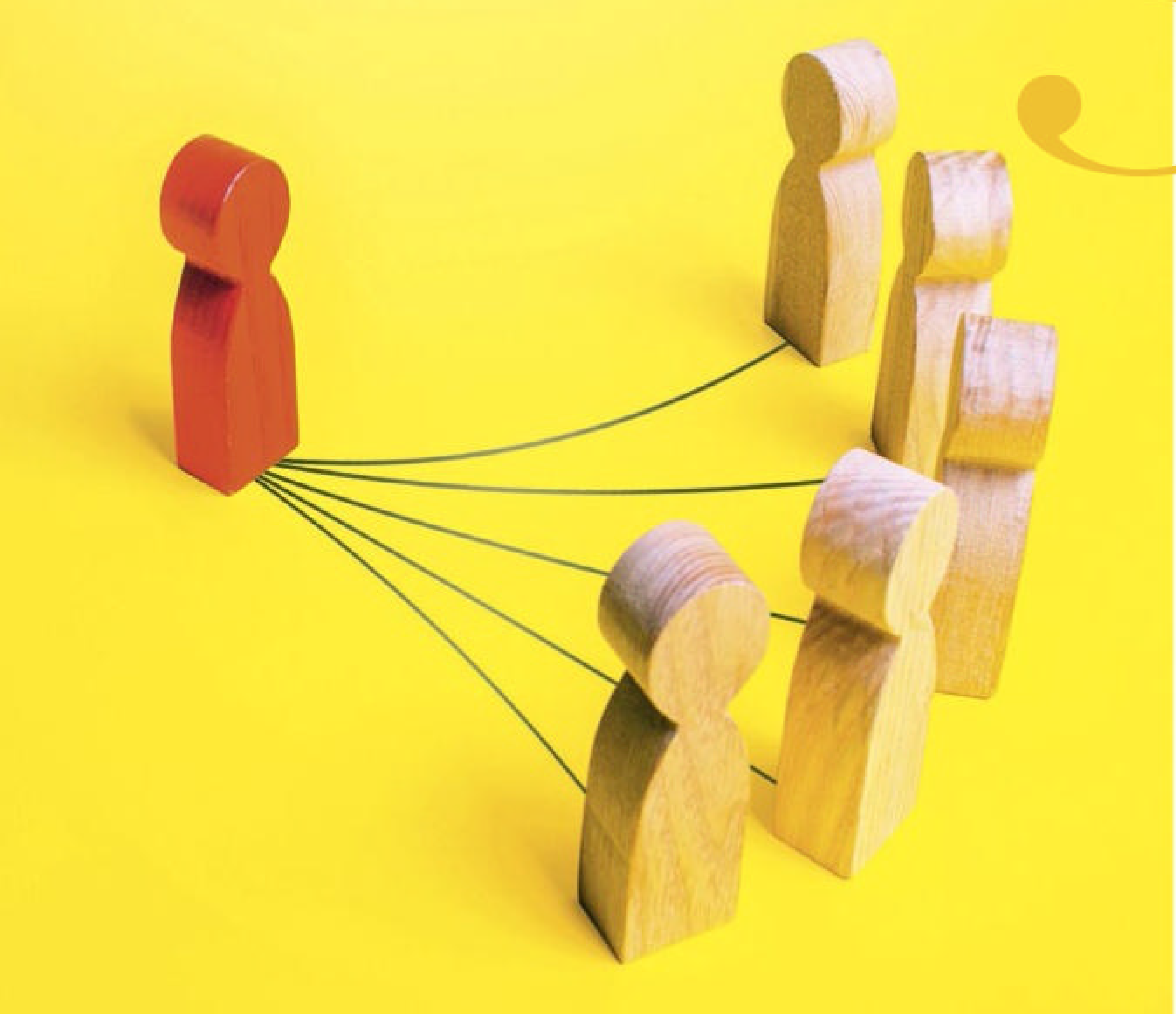
Even if you know your colleague purposely leaves you off happy hour invites or that a neighbour spoke ill of you, revisiting these complaints hurts only you. “Repressing angry feelings may increase blood pressure and the risk of coronary heart disease,” says psychologist Dr Renee Exelbert. “But forgiveness can lead to healthier relationships and improved mental health.” Consider where the other person was coming from (maybe your colleague feels insecure about their performance at work or your neighbour has been stressed by family issues). Even if you can’t pardon them, you can decide it’s their problem, not yours, and commit to a fresh start.

2

Old habit: SHOPPING FOR HAPPINESS

INSTEAD *Revel in non-material joys and experiences*

“So much of our energy is spent chasing [physical] things we think will make us happy,” says psychologist Dr Amy Johnson, author of *The Little Book of Big Change*. “The next holiday, losing a few kilos – they never lead to lasting joy.” We’re made to ‘recalibrate’ quickly after events, so the happiness boost triggered by things outside of ourselves fades fast. Teaching a niece how to read, having fun with friends – intangible things like these will give you real warm fuzzies.



3

Old habit: SHOULDERING RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVERYTHING

INSTEAD *Delegate – even if it doesn’t seem worth it*

Whether you’re handling a big project at work or planning a family celebration, such as a major birthday or wedding anniversary, it’s easy to fall into the trap of doing most of the work to be sure the end result is perfect. “We go through life as if we’re responsible for every outcome we experience,” says Dr Johnson. “We fail to recognise just how much happens effortlessly.” Letting other people pick up the slack will lower your stress, and you may be pleasantly surprised with the outcome. ►

4

Old habit: TRACKING WHO DISAPPOINTS YOU

INSTEAD *Notice who does comes through*

It's hard to forget friends who didn't visit when you were sick or failed to attend an event you organised. "This 'injustice collecting' causes us to see the glass as half empty versus half full," Dr Exelbert says. "By embracing gratitude for those who do show up, you'll improve your happiness, social relationships and self-esteem, and increase your longevity." Try starting a gratitude journal: Every day, write a few sentences about something you're thankful for. In addition to loved ones, maybe you're grateful for a barista who knows what your 'usual' is and always gives it to you with a smile.

5

Old habit: COMPARING YOURSELF WITH PEOPLE AROUND YOU

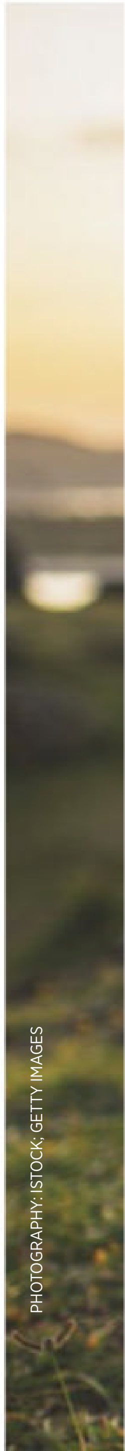
INSTEAD *Think about what makes you special*

Lots of us have a friend who posts perfect photos of their life on social media, but dwelling on where you fall short isn't helpful. "By learning to focus on yourself instead of others, you can decrease your stress and anxiety, increase your happiness and self-esteem, and live a more purposeful and authentic life," says Dr Exelbert. She suggests you should celebrate your strengths and victories (even the tiny ones!) and do things that bring you contentment without external validation.

Did you know?

45 per cent of what you do every day is habitual.

SOURCE: ASSOCIATION FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE



PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK; GETTY IMAGES

6

Old habit: CONSTANTLY CHECKING YOUR PHONE

INSTEAD *Take intentional breaks*

Leave your phone out of the picture when you're with friends and family, even if you're just digging into takeaway food together on the couch. "You simply can't focus after so much online time; this practice shortens your attention span," explains clinical psychologist Dr Lori Whatley, author of *Connected and Engaged*. Plus, she adds, "too much social media use has been connected to depression and anxiety." One thing that'll help: practising mindfulness. If you're new to the idea, try a meditation and mindfulness app, like Headspace. Staying in the present moment should improve your emotional wellbeing and it'll likely make your companions happier as well.

7

Old habit: OVERTHINKING

INSTEAD *Focus on what you can control*

Thousands of years ago, the practice of turning stuff over in our minds kept us from repeating dangerous mistakes, says psychiatrist Dr Mimi Winsberg. These days, however, overthinking can lead you to agonise over mundane things, like the wording of an email or events beyond your control. To prevent spiralling, decide whether you're obsessing about something you can actually change. If so, allot a certain amount of time to taking action and then distract yourself with an activity, such as a movie or exercise session. **P**

IT'S CRUNCH TIME

For a toned, strong core, you can't go past crunches. Try these new takes to feel your best.

BY MARIANNE McGINNIS

Crunches are one of the fastest ways to firm your midsection, but not everyone loves to do them. So, we turned to the experts to create a kind of crunch routine that, when combined with regular cardio, can help whittle down your middle in just four moves. Not only that, but these crunches will also strengthen your core, improve balance and posture and support better exercise form, especially with running.

Before you start the program, take a minute to learn about your abs (opposite) and find out why it's so important to keep them strong and tight. Okay, let's get to work!

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

You'll do a blend of ab work and cardio during the week.

3 DAYS A WEEK

Do the Firming Workout (see over the page) on non-consecutive days to strengthen and tone your midsection.

5 DAYS A WEEK

Do 30 to 40 minutes of cardio, such as brisk walking, jogging, swimming or bike riding, to rev up your metabolism and burn more kilojoules. You should be breathing hard but still able to talk in short sentences.

Sample workout schedule

Monday	*Tuesday*	*Wednesday*	*Thursday*	*Friday*	*Saturday*	*Sunday*
ABS AND CARDIO	CARDIO	REST	ABS AND CARDIO	REST	ABS AND CARDIO	CARDIO

MEET YOUR ABS

What they are

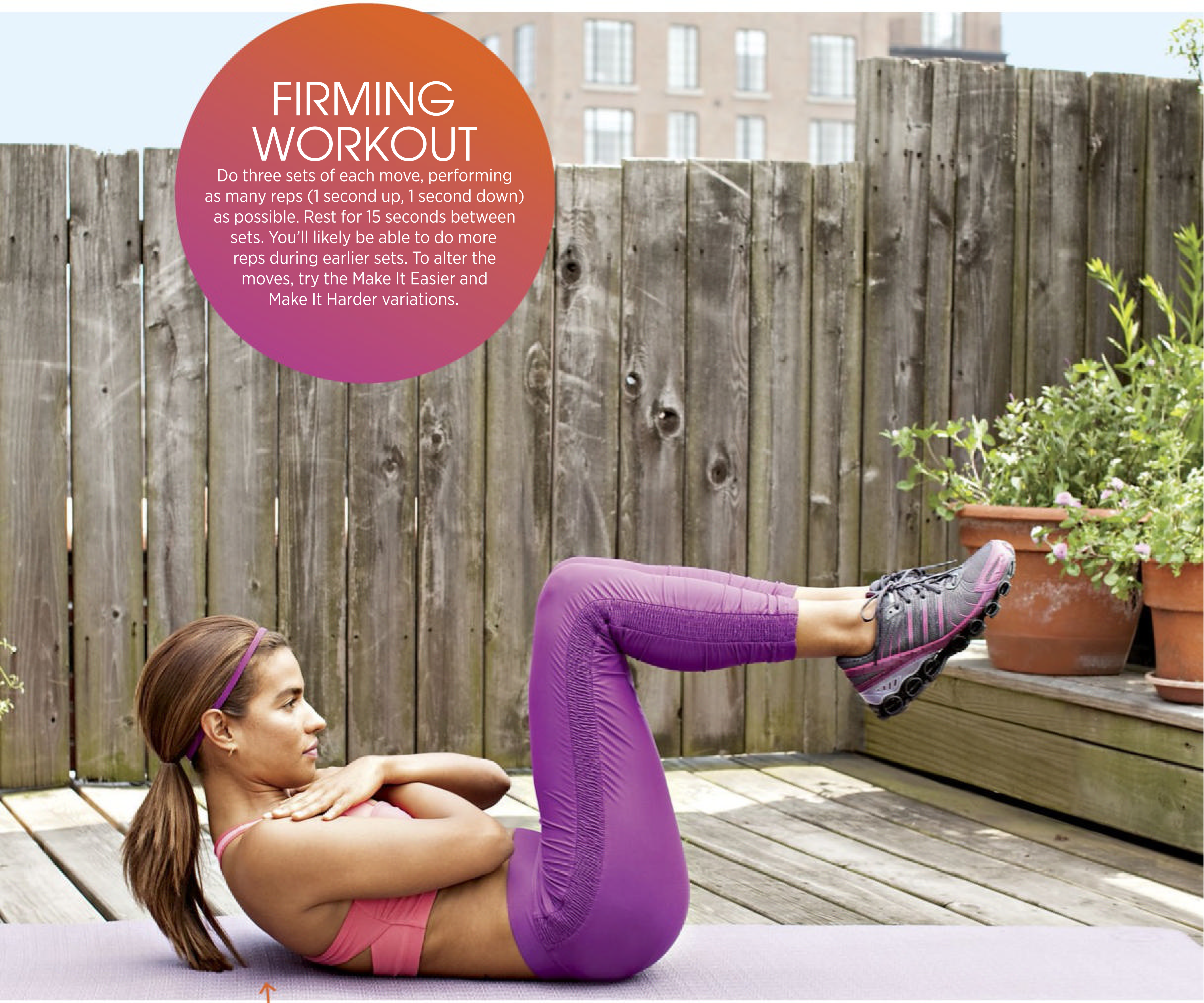
Four main muscles make up your abs. The so-called 'six-pack' is actually named the rectus abdominis, and it helps you lean forward at the waist. Under that is the transverse abdominis, a muscle deep in your core that assists in stabilising the spine. And, in the middle of your torso, on the sides, are the internal and external obliques, which allow you to rotate your trunk.

What they do

Your abdominals are absolutely crucial to your health and safety. Beyond the simple things, such as keeping you upright while sitting or helping you roll over to hit snooze in the morning, they aid you in balancing when you're walking on uneven or unsteady ground, preventing falls. They also protect internal organs like the intestines and the liver – if someone were to punch you in the stomach, your abs would contract to protect the organs behind them. They even help internally support reproductive organs: The abdominal muscles intertwine with those of your pelvic floor, so strong abs can help prevent or ease stress incontinence, a condition that causes accidental peeing when you laugh, cough or sneeze. ►

FIRMING WORKOUT

Do three sets of each move, performing as many reps (1 second up, 1 second down) as possible. Rest for 15 seconds between sets. You'll likely be able to do more reps during earlier sets. To alter the moves, try the Make It Easier and Make It Harder variations.



Tips

1. Don't pull your chin toward chest.
2. Imagine sliding your ribcage toward hips and focus on abs doing the work.

Hipless crunch

This variation better targets abs by preventing your hips and upper body from helping you lift.

Lie face up with legs lifted and bent, calves parallel to ground and feet relaxed. Cross arms over chest with hands on shoulders. Contract abs and lift head, shoulders and upper back about 30 degrees off the ground. Lower upper body without touching head to ground. Exhale as you lift, and inhale as you lower.

MAKE IT EASIER

Rest calves on a chair and extend arms down by your sides.

MAKE IT HARDER

Extend legs straight up and keep them perpendicular throughout.

STOP WHEN…

1. You start pulling or jerking up with head, neck or shoulders.
2. You can't keep neck relaxed.

No-hands reverse crunch

Instead of keeping arms by your sides, anchor them overhead to activate more belly muscles.
Lie face up with arms overhead and hands grasping a heavy piece of furniture or railing. Raise feet into the air with legs bent. Contract abs, press back into the ground and lift hips off the ground. Exhale as you lift, and then inhale as you lower.

MAKE IT EASIER

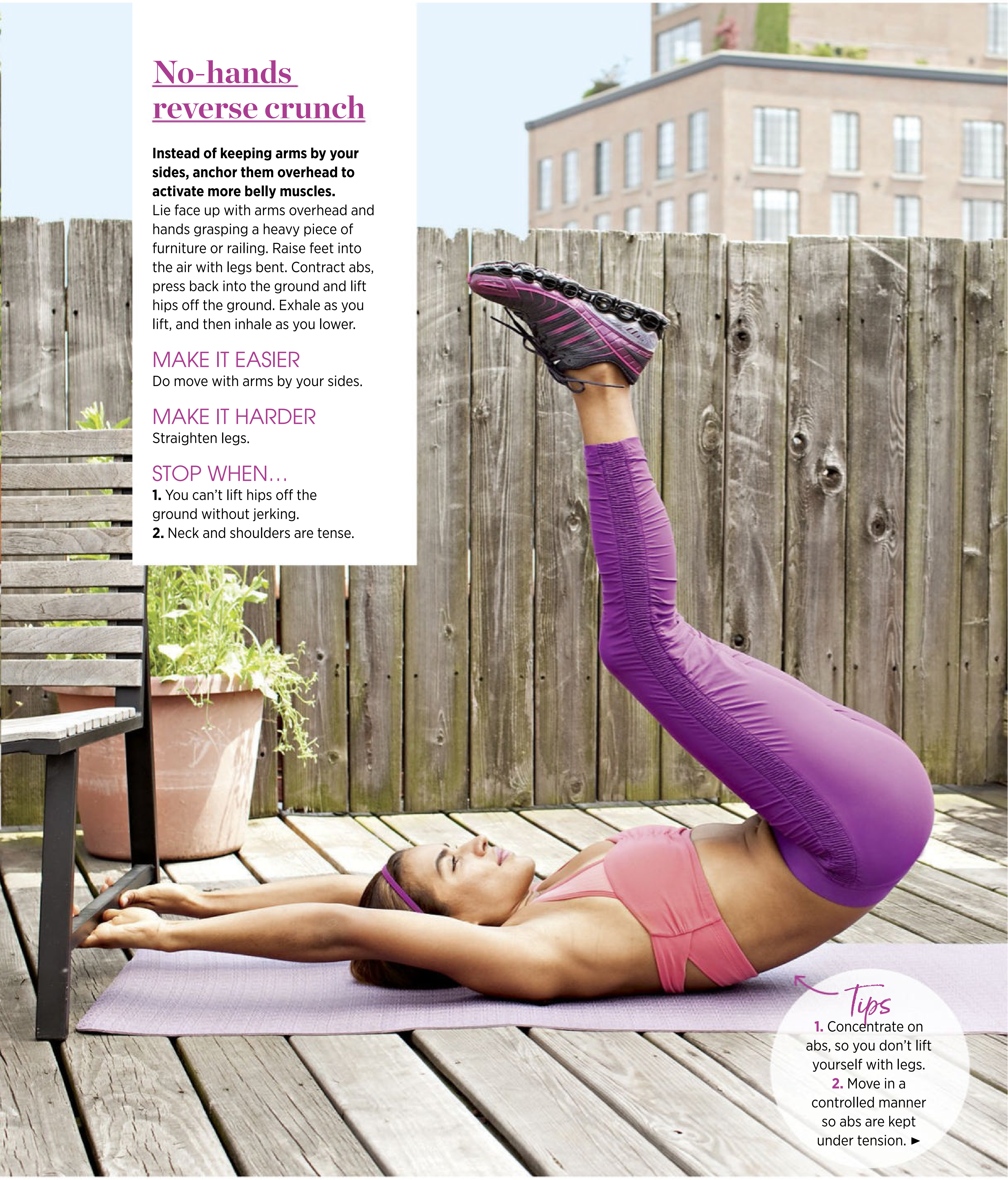
Do move with arms by your sides.

MAKE IT HARDER

Straighten legs.

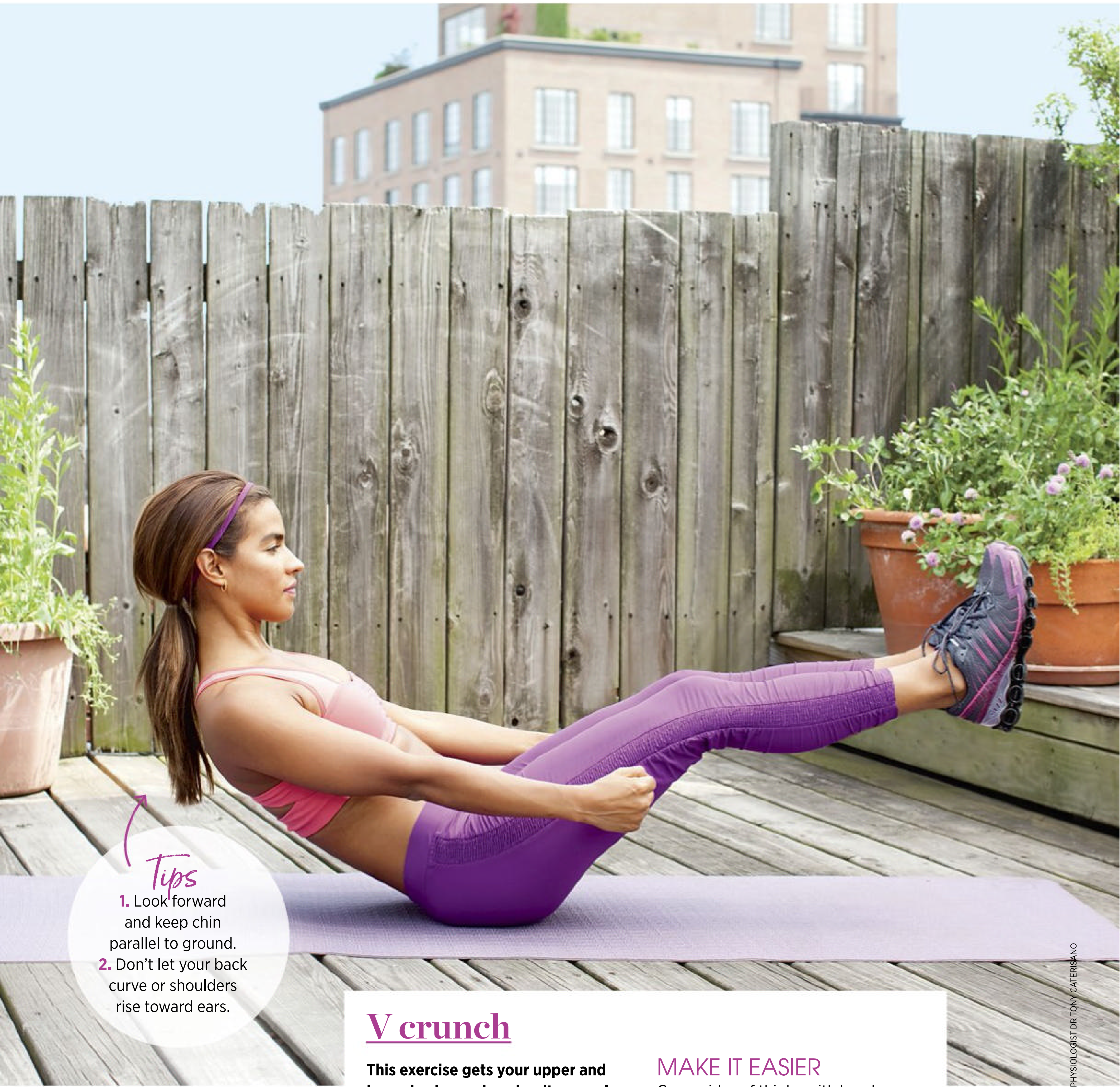
STOP WHEN…

1. You can't lift hips off the ground without jerking.
2. Neck and shoulders are tense.



Tips

1. Concentrate on abs, so you don't lift yourself with legs.
2. Move in a controlled manner so abs are kept under tension. ►



Tips

1. Look forward and keep chin parallel to ground.
2. Don't let your back curve or shoulders rise toward ears.

V crunch

This exercise gets your upper and lower body moving simultaneously to recruit the maximum number of muscle fibres in your midsection. Balance on your tailbone with legs bent, feet off the ground and arms bent by your sides. Make sure your back is straight and chest is lifted. Lean back and extend arms and legs. Pull back to the starting position.

MAKE IT EASIER

Grasp sides of thighs with hands.

MAKE IT HARDER

Hold a 2kg dumbbell in each hand.

STOP WHEN…

1. You can't keep arms or legs up, or you can't keep your chest lifted.
2. Back or neck starts to hurt.

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRIS ECKERT/STUDIO D. WORKOUT DESIGNED BY EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGIST DR TONY CATERISANO

> Do them after crunches to ensure complete fatigue – and firm abs from every angle.

Side plank

Static balancing moves like this one are challenging because your deepest abs work really hard to hold your core in mid-air. Do them after crunches to ensure complete fatigue – and firm abs from every angle. Lie on your right side, elbow beneath shoulder, feet stacked and left hand on hip. Contract your abs to lift hip and leg off the ground. Hold until fatigued, noting your time. Complete three sets before switching sides.

MAKE IT EASIER

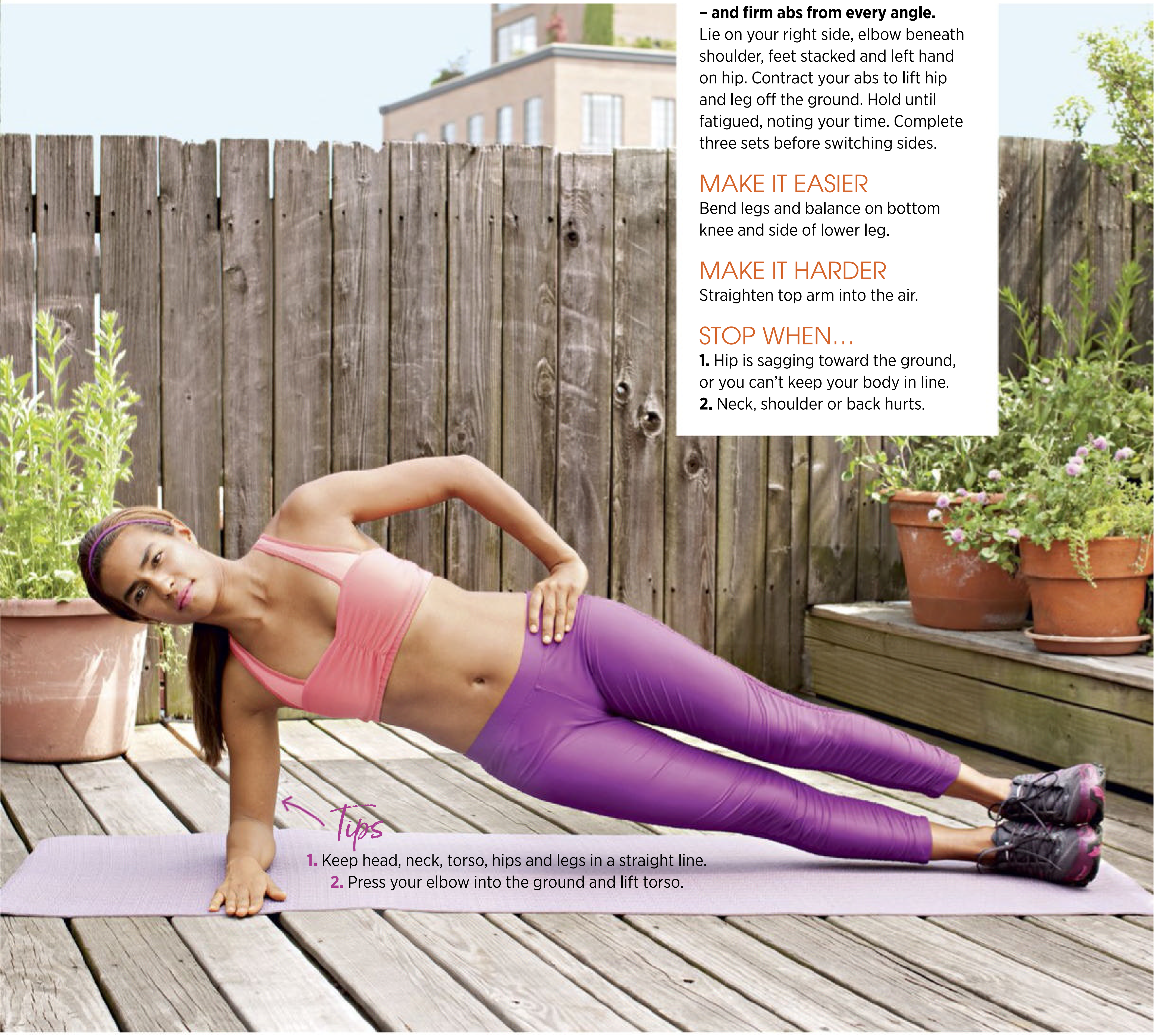
Bend legs and balance on bottom knee and side of lower leg.

MAKE IT HARDER

Straighten top arm into the air.

STOP WHEN…

1. Hip is sagging toward the ground, or you can't keep your body in line.
2. Neck, shoulder or back hurts.



Tips

1. Keep head, neck, torso, hips and legs in a straight line.
2. Press your elbow into the ground and lift torso.

CONQUER SWEET

YOUR 3-WEEK PLAN

YOUR TOOTH

Find yourself constantly giving into those afternoon sweet treats or grazing on sugary snacks while watching TV? You can break free with this easy step-by-step guide.

BY KATE BAYLESS AND JESSICA MIGALA

Over the next three weeks, you'll sever the hold that sugar has on your body and your brain. And it's going to be simpler – and sweeter – than you might think. Once you're free of the sugary shackles that bind you, a new healthy way of living awaits. Don't worry, it won't be bland! Turn over to start your journey. ►

YOUR 3-WEEK PLAN

WEEK 1

MONDAY

Nix the obvious treats

It's time to clear out the pantry and get rid of the sweet biscuits, cakes and chocolates. Discard any 'energy bars' and toffees lurking in your handbag. And, yes, delete the snacks in your office drawer, too. It's a no-brainer place to start, since the added sugar in junk foods is easy to spot. Plus, you'll slash a whole bunch of unnecessary kilojoules from your diet.

TUESDAY

Don't add sugar to anything

Your body breaks down simple sugars like this faster than puppy videos go viral. The problem with that? Overindulging causes blood sugar surges followed by crashes, which can make you even hungrier (see box, opposite). And cap your use of natural sweeteners, such as honey or maple syrup – your body handles those the same way as sugar. Artificial sugars are leaving your diet today, too. "They're sweeter than sugar, and your body may still respond with the same hormonal cascade, as if it's regular sugar," says nutritionist Kathleen Alleaume. "That's why they don't help you lose weight and may even trick you into overconsumption."

WEDNESDAY

Say no to sugary drinks

Yes, you know soft drinks have added sugar, but other drinks mightn't be so obvious, like bottled iced teas and flavoured mineral water. This even includes 'healthy' drinks, like kombucha, and many non-dairy milks, like soy and almond. Hold off on that deliciousness this week. Same goes for artificially sweetened stuff, like diet soft drinks: These beverages can add significantly to belly fat, weaken bones and lead to metabolic syndrome, which is the cluster of high blood pressure, high blood sugar and high cholesterol that can result in diabetes and heart disease.

THURSDAY

Go plain

Today, you'll start reading ingredient labels like it's your job. Switch out your flavoured yoghurt or almond milk for plain versions. (You'll grow to love them – promise!) Some flavoured yoghurts pack nearly six teaspoons of added sugar into their tiny containers, which is the total amount of added sugar the World Health Organization suggests you eat in an entire day. Instead, sweeten your favourite foods with whole fruit, such as apples, peaches, kiwifruit, bananas and apricots. And be on the lookout for hidden sugar, too: tomato sauce, mayonnaise, dry biscuits, peanut butter and seemingly healthy breakfast cereals are all common culprits.

FRIDAY

Kick out refined grains

"White flour, white rice and white bread are basically just sugar," says Kathleen. In fact, you might not think you have a sweet tooth, but, if you're eating white bread sandwiches, or white rice sushi or rice crackers regularly, you're probably fooling yourself. "The white flour is highly refined and breaks down just as quickly as sugar," she adds. The fix? Switch to wholegrains: brown rice, grainy bread and crackers and quinoa are all your friends. The rules are pretty simple: if it's white, it's the wrong choice.

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

Lose the booze

That's right. If your weekend routine involves savouring a few glasses of vino with dinner or while meeting friends, you'll need to cut back. "Red wine may have phytochemicals and health benefits, but the truth is that alcohol consumption causes an increase in insulin secretion, which leads to low blood sugar," explains Kathleen. This may, in turn, increase your appetite and cravings, she adds.

BE LABEL SAVVY

4 grams sugar = 1 teaspoon

Check the nutrition information panel on foods to make sure that 'healthy' choice is not, in fact, loaded with sugar.

STAY FULLER FOR LONGER

	TYPE	HOW THEY AFFECT HUNGER	SLIM-DOWN STRATEGY
EAT RARELY	**Refined grains**	Processed grains – which have been stripped of fibre and valuable nutrients such as antioxidants – speed through your gut, making you hungry again shortly after eating them.	Have no more than two daily handfuls of refined grains, such as white rice or white flour. Try to eat these carbs with protein to help decelerate their race through your stomach.
EAT IN MODERATION	**Wholegrains**	Since it requires more energy for your body to turn wholegrain foods into energy, your digestive system can't quickly process them like their refined counterparts. The result? They keep you feeling satisfied for longer, meaning fewer cravings.	Eat up to three servings a day of 100 per cent wholegrains. One study found people who do so are 76 times more likely to get the most fibre – which has been linked to weight loss.
EAT YOUR FILL	**Starches**	Research reveals a welcome twist on this group of foods, which increase satiety: It's not carbs like potatoes that do waistline damage, but the degree to which they're processed (fried in oil versus baked, the latter of which being, by far, the healthiest option).	Don't be afraid to include potatoes or bananas (try the greenish ones) on your plate. All contain resistant starch, which shows a waist-slimming promise. Evidence suggests it acts like prebiotic fibre, slowing digestion, feeding the 'friendly' gut bacteria and shutting down hunger hormones.
	Legumes (beans, lentils and chickpeas)	Even though they contain protein and fibre, many diet plans (including Paleo) have banished them. In reality, they should be your go-to carbs. One study found that people felt 31 per cent fuller after eating 1 cup of legumes daily.	Get started by swapping ¼ cup cooked beans for 100-120g serve of meat; you'll save up to 4g of fat and nearly 126kJ. Then work some beans and other legumes into your regular meals (peanuts and chickpeas count). ►

YOUR 3-WEEK PLAN

WEEK 2

This week, you'll retrain your 'sweet' taste buds as you trade added sugars for fruit and other all-natural sugars.

BY DR DAVID KATZ AND JOE KITA

You are what you eat, because your body is literally manufactured out of the food you consume. And the nutritional content of what you eat determines the composition of your cell membranes, bone marrow, blood and hormones. That's why junk food and most snack foods are neither cute nor innocuous.

There's also strong evidence that, as a rule, the closer your food is to its natural state, the fewer kilojoules it'll take for you to feel satisfied. The reason? Whole foods contain lots of fibre and fluid, a high ratio of nutrients to kilojoules and are free of added flavours, like salt and sugar. As a result, they send signals of satiety to your brain before you consume too many kilojoules. For example, think of how many raw almonds you eat before stopping, and then compare that to honey roasted almonds – that sugary coating spurs you to eat more, right? By choosing whole or minimally processed foods, you naturally decrease the amount of added sugar you're taking in and you can control your weight permanently without feeling deprived, hungry or having constant cravings.

Now that you've eliminated the biggest sources of added sugar in your diet, you'll focus this week on replacing those unhealthy foods and habits with much better ones. Let's get started with day one.

1 PLAN MEALS AHEAD

Let's face it, it's much easier to resort to takeaway or warm up a frozen pizza when you're tired or overworked after a long day. But meal planning helps to eliminate the risk of temptation. Decide at the beginning of the week which healthy foods you want to prepare and then shop for these foods and prep what you can before the week commences. If you make your own lunches and have healthy food on hand, you'll be less likely to rely on unhealthy store-bought items (and you'll save money, too!).

2 SHOP THE PERIMETER OF THE SUPERMARKET

Most natural ingredients, such as fresh fruit and vegetables, meat and fish, are on the outside aisles of grocery shops. As you go deeper into the centre of the store, you encounter more processed and packaged food (where hidden sugar lies in wait to catch you).

3 READ LABELS

It's the easiest way to distinguish a healthy food from a highly processed one that's full of added sugar. Think about it: A head of lettuce has no label (because it's totally natural), while a bag of potato chips has a dozen or more ingredients (highly processed). Instead of eliminating all processed foods from your diet, practise studying the labels on the packaging. On the nutrition information panel, note the 'sugars' column to see what the damage is. It's worth remembering that 4 grams of sugar = 1 teaspoon.

4 EAT AT HOME MORE

By having meals at home, you're avoiding the highly processed foods that many restaurants or takeaway joints use in their meals. To make home cooking easier, master a few one-pan dishes with simple ingredients that you can whip up quickly: think basic stir-fries, frittatas and one-pan bakes that'll feed your family for days. Cooking your own meals helps you appreciate and enjoy the food more, especially if you share the process with others.

5 ADJUST YOUR TASTE BUDS

If you're accustomed to eating food with lots of added sugar, salt, fat and other additives, you'll need to retrain your taste buds to appreciate the more subtle flavours of whole foods. For instance, flavour your yoghurt with real fruit, such as berries, instead of buying the flavoured kind. Or, if you want to reduce the amount of white rice or white pasta you're eating and don't immediately like the taste of the brown rice or wholegrain pasta varieties, mix it with white (in decreasing amounts) until you adapt. The same process works for salty and fatty foods, too.

6 KEEP TREATS OUT OF SIGHT

Whether it's a sugar bowl on the kitchen bench or a lolly jar on your desk, it's hard to resist sugar when it's staring right at you. A simple way to eat less of it is to make the sugar you do have around you harder to find. Donate your lolly stash to a colleague's desk at the far end of the room, or park your car on the side of your office building that doesn't have you walk right by the bakery. When it takes extra effort to get your sugar fix, you'll be giving your mind more time to talk yourself out of making an unhealthy choice.

7 SATISFY YOUR SWEET TOOTH WITH FRESH FRUIT

When you eliminate added sugars from your life, you'll recalibrate your taste buds to appreciate what true sweetness is. And a naturally sweet, delicious food like fruit can help you quell cravings for sugary treats while delivering nutrients. "The amount of fibre, phytochemicals and vitamins you're getting in those balance the sugar out," explains Kathleen. Fructose, fruit's built-in sugar, makes a pit stop in your liver, a diversion that helps prevent spikes in blood sugar levels. Whole fruit is also packaged up with fibre, vitamins and water that all keep you feeling full. One warning, though: It is possible to over-fruit yourself. So, stick to the recommended two serves per day.

TRY THESE SUGAR-FREE BANANA PANCAKES

Mash 2 very ripe bananas in a mixing bowl; whisk in 2 eggs. Add 350g self-raising flour; whisk until combined. Cook pancakes in a greased pan and flip when small bubbles form on pancake. So quick and easy! Makes 12.

The sugar cycle

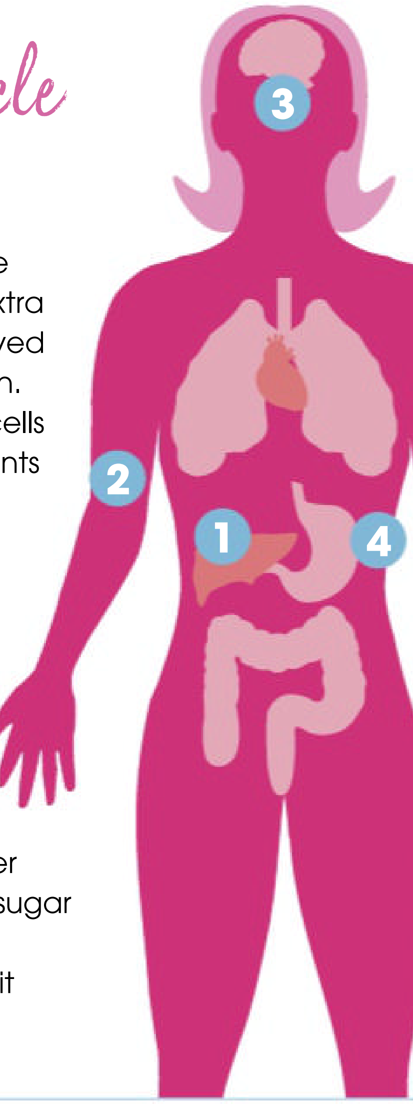
How it tricks the brain into wanting more

1 Excess sugar drives the pancreas to produce extra insulin, a hormone involved in blood sugar regulation.

2 The insulin signals fat cells to store excessive amounts of glucose, fatty acids and other substances rich in kilojoules.

3 With too few kilojoules remaining in the bloodstream, the brain, which has very high energy needs, believes it's now low on fuel.

4 As a result, your hunger level rises quickly – and sugar becomes alluring when you're hungry because it provides fast energy. ►



YOUR
3-WEEK
PLAN

WEEK 3

Want to set yourself up for lasting success? This week is about knowing the best strategies to keep your healthy habits on track in the real world. Try all seven tips, then stick with the ones that help you crush your sugar addiction for life.

1 NOTICE WHAT TRIGGERS YOUR CRAVINGS

"A trigger is the thing that cues or triggers a habit," explains Dr Gina Cleo, one of Australia's leading experts in habit change and wellbeing. For example, it may be that you tend to graze on chocolates while enjoying binge watching your favourite Netflix series, so the act of watching TV might be subconsciously triggering the desire for chocolates. Dr Cleo says these habits become as deeply connected and subconscious as getting into your car and automatically putting your seatbelt on. Because they're subconscious, it may take time for you to recognise them.

Dr Cleo admits that she had to contend with this sweet desire herself. "I had an unwanted habit where, whenever I'd get petrol, I would grab a Snickers bar," she shares. Through her research, she says that "she realised that every time I grabbed that chocolate bar at the petrol station, I was actually reinforcing this habit. Every time you do a habit, you're making it stronger and stronger. And every time you choose not to do your unwanted habit, you're making it easier for yourself to not do it again."

2 BREAK THE HABIT STACKING

Of course, most of us can't just drop a bad habit for good – you need to replace it. Sometimes, says Dr Cleo, simple tweaks are surprisingly effective. For example, some of her clients have found that sitting in a different chair while watching TV didn't trigger the same snacking impulse. If you discover your sugar cravings are set off by a need to indulge in some 'me time' gratification, Dr Cleo suggests asking yourself, 'How else can I achieve that?' "That can be either stretching for 10 minutes, making a herbal tea, running a bath, listening to soft music, whatever it might be to give yourself that same reward that your body is seeking."

And be patient, as breaking a habit takes practice. "The first few days are always the hardest," says Dr Cleo. "It's okay to feel a little bit strange if you don't do (your usual habit), but recognise that feeling is not going to last very long. The less you do this habitual thing, the less automatic it's going to feel. And, with time, not doing that habit is going to be your new normal. So, hold on to that thought."

SUGAR VS HONEY

There's a confusing health halo over honey. "While honey does have some beneficial micronutrients, using it in place of table sugar won't lower cravings for sweet foods," says dietitian Dawn Jackson Blatner.

3 TAKE A FEW DEEP BREATHS

When something gets you stressed out, sending your emotions on a roller coaster, your blood sugar goes along for the ride because stress hormones, like adrenaline, increase blood glucose. Next time the urge to stress-eat strikes, try a yogic breathing technique. Inhale deeply for four counts, hold your breath for seven counts and exhale for eight counts – then repeat for four cycles. The exercise gives you a minute to pause and regroup, so you feel less stressed, says meditation teacher Kathleen Lisson. Once you're calm, eating a chocolate bar might not feel like the most important thing in the world.

4 ID YOUR DANGER ZONES

Anticipate lapses in willpower and create diversion strategies. If you grab a sugary treat because you're stressed at work, that's a high-risk situation. Ask yourself, 'What can I do tomorrow at that high-risk time to avoid the vending machine?' Maybe you could step outside for a few minutes, refill your water bottle or watch a funny video at your desk. You don't have to be a willpower warrior 24/7 – only when you're in your danger zones.

5 ENLIST HELP

The more accountable you are to others, the more likely you are to stick it out. Recruit a buddy for taking walks or grabbing coffee as needed, or to give you the stink eye when you reach for a sweet snack. You can even enlist digital support. The goal-setting app Coach.me (it's free) allows you to invite friends to view your progress and leave comments as well as crowdsource encouragement.

6 TRACK YOURSELF LIKE A BLOODHOUND

Take a few minutes each day to log how well you're coping. "Taking note of your behaviour makes you aware of your actions, so you're forced to make conscious decisions," says psychologist Dr James Claiborn.

7 TREAT YOURSELF

Reward yourself with a meaningful (non-food) treat for accomplishing one day, three days, a week of sticking to your healthy habits. Don't skip this step. It's key to motivation – and that's what will get you through!

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK; GETTY IMAGES

THE CHANGE I NEVER SAW COMING

At just 24, Beth Dreher was faced with both cancer and menopause. Now in midlife, she recounts her journey and how it changed the way she sees herself.

The warmth began on my neck, just below my ears, and moved slowly upward. Soon, heat emanated from my scalp, as if I'd eaten a hot chilli. My face was flushed – I couldn't see it, but I could feel it. Even the backs of my hands were moistened with sweat. My entire body felt oddly uncomfortably and suddenly very warm.

If you're a 'woman of a certain age', you'll recognise the telltale signs of a hot flush, but I was 24 and not sure what was going on. It was one of many unexpected things happening to my body around that time. By then, I was just taking it day by day. Months before my first hot flush, I'd been feeling unusually bloated and crampy. At times, I felt a sharp pain on the right side of my abdomen. Just two years removed from playing competitive soccer, I was now too uncomfortable for even a slow jog. One doctor diagnosed me with irritable bowel syndrome; another thought I had a UTI. None of them seemed all that concerned.

I, however, was. After a morning of particularly bothersome abdominal pain and built-up frustration, I went to intensive care. A doctor there performed an ultrasound, diagnosed me with ovarian cysts and prescribed birth control. Three months later, I was at my gynaecologist's office for a follow-up for the ovarian cyst diagnosis. I told her about my experience – I still felt bloated and had no appetite, and the birth control hadn't done much as far as I could tell – and she shuffled me into an examination room for another ultrasound.

Later, as we sat in her office, she explained that I had a large mass in my abdomen that had enveloped my ovaries – no doubt the cause of my symptoms. At first, I felt a strange sense of relief: Finally, someone had acknowledged that something was wrong! But, when she looped in an oncologist "as a precaution", my relief shifted mostly to denial: surely it's nothing.

Less than a week later, doctors removed the mass (the size of a mini Nerf football [about 13 centimetres], I was told), both ovaries and my appendix, which had got mixed up in it all. I was diagnosed with Stage IV ovarian cancer. ►

> We were all in our 20s... What did we know about menopause, cancer, chemotherapy, fear of recurrence, loss, death?

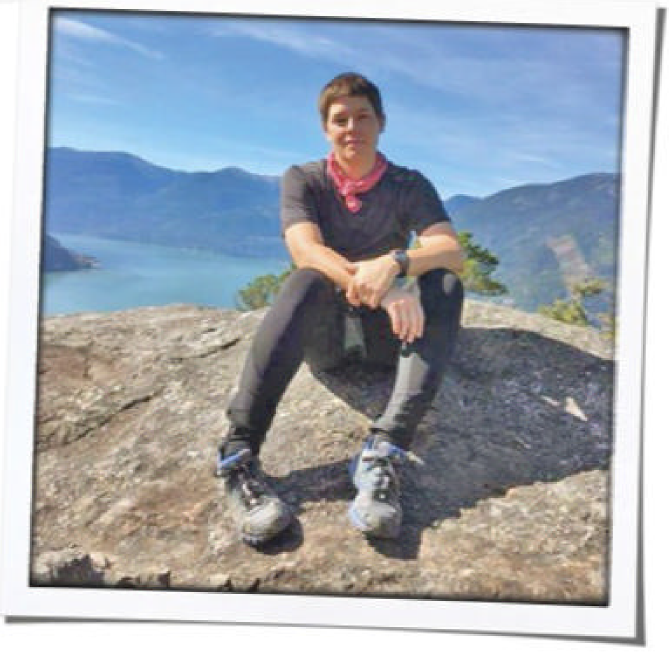
BEFORE MY TIME

So, that's how I found myself, well before I owned a decent set of dishes, in menopause. That hot flush was, I figured out, a symptom of menopause, which I had been put into surgically with the removal of my ovaries. Fortunately, my cancer diagnosis was downgraded to Stage I, but, a few months later, doctors detected a "shadow" on a follow-up scan, and I had a total hysterectomy to remove my uterus, fallopian tubes and cervix.

As is the case for many people in menopause (who are typically in their late 40s or early 50s), my symptoms were all over the map. I wasn't sleeping well, mostly because of night sweats. Before the hysterectomy, I had a random period, which is rare but not unheard of after a double oophorectomy (the medical term for removing the ovaries). I went on a few completely arbitrary, out-of-character, uncontrolled crying moments. Maybe it was my roiling hormones, a release of the emotions (shock, grief, anger) I'd tamped down over the previous months or a little of both. But, suddenly, I'd be overcome. Granted, menopause wasn't as bad as, say, having the cancer come back. Still, it was a lot.

My primary support system at the time consisted of my partner and a good friend. But what did we know about menopause, cancer, chemotherapy, fear of recurrence, loss, death? We were all in our 20s – caregiving wasn't a skill any of us had acquired and I didn't know how to anticipate or ask for what I needed.

But there was one task we knew we could handle, and it involved my friend's boyfriend's electric razor. About a week into chemo, my shoulder-length hair began to fall out. So, one sunny Sunday, the three of us moved the dining room furniture out of the way, set up a 'barber chair' in the middle of the room and buzz-cut my hair. I went into the bathroom to check out the results in the mirror, expecting a "Hear me roar!"



From top: After her surgeries, Beth (centre), who was a keen sportswoman and hiker, says her body went from "powerful to a bit pathetic".

G.I. Jane moment. Instead, I saw that I was pale, my eyes dim, my hair patchy. I was still sick, but now I had much shorter hair.

THE BODY I'D THOUGHT I KNEW

Going through cancer and menopause at 24 was a lesson in accepting a body that I'd thought I knew, a body that had been a source of power and identity and possibility. During my parents' divorce when I was 12, and through the difficult years that followed, I used to practise soccer for hours on end, often alone, honing my body and calming my mind – sweat as distraction. Throughout university, I was an athlete first, with everything else a distant second. After I graduated, I started running, cycling, hiking – being outside and active was my happy place. ►

> One thing my menopause experience has done for me is make my definition of gender more expansive. Fertility or none, long hair or short, strong or weak, I'm me.

But, after my surgeries, and through a few months of chemotherapy and recovery, my muscles and my fitness level dwindled, I stopped having a period, hot flushes began and I was nursing a 18-centimetre scar down the middle of my stomach. My body had morphed from powerful to, I felt, a bit pathetic. My years-long relationship with my girlfriend frayed around the edges, too. Sickness and surgery aren't exactly a love language, and each of us was pushed to our emotional and physical limit. Still, my partner stuck with me, spending many a Friday night on the couch for a movie marathon, endlessly putting my needs ahead of her own.

WHAT I LOST, WHAT I GAINED

Luckily, in the year after my chemo ended, my hair grew back and my muscles returned. I took up sprint triathlons and joined an adult soccer team. My doctor and I got the hot flushes and night sweats under control with hormone therapy, which I'll continue for the rest of my life. A few years later, my girlfriend and I broke up, which was terribly hard. It felt more like the dissolution of a marriage considering everything we'd been through together.

In some ways, my particular series of losses – ovaries, hair, uterus, period, fertility – kicked off a decades-long exploration of gender, which has led me to rethink, in some ways, what it means to be female. Many people, often without realising it, still carry a set of expectations for and assumptions about women – they should look a certain way, be sensitive and deferential, embrace and exercise their fertility. Misogyny runs deep; our culture, with its nearly endless examples of physical and psychological violence against women, reinforces it every day.

One thing my menopause experience has done for me is make my definition of gender more expansive, with no label feeling just right to define who I am or how I present myself. Fertility or none, long hair or short, strong or weak, I'm me.

Beth (right) with her wife, Alison, sightseeing in London.

EMBRACING MY FUTURE

I'm 44 now and, looking back, I can't say I had any particular vision of the future. My then partner and I had barely discussed having children. So, when my oncologist briefed me before the first surgery that the removal of my ovaries would mean I couldn't get pregnant, I hardly gave it a second thought. Besides, did I even want children? I just didn't know.

At 24, before menopause, I suppose I had certain assumptions about the kind of life that might be available to me, or at least not unavailable to me – biological children and all that comes with them. But, even had I known for sure that I wanted kids, it wouldn't have mattered much. At the time of my surgeries, in 2004, egg freezing was years from becoming routine, and I couldn't have afforded it anyway. Have I found peace with the idea of never having biological children? Is it accurate to say you've found peace with something you hadn't fully considered before the option disappeared? Let's just say that I've accepted my reality.

At the end of the day, I think I'll try to live up to the essence of the word 'fertile', which comes from the Latin *fertilis*, meaning 'bearing in abundance, fruitful, productive'. The definition doesn't specify what you bear in abundance. At the moment, my cup overflows with love and appreciation for my wife, my work, my health. As for the rest, I'm content to just wait and see. **P**

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK; COURTESY OF BETH DREHER. BETH DREHER IS THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF GOOD HOUSEKEEPING US

Have the night

# of your life

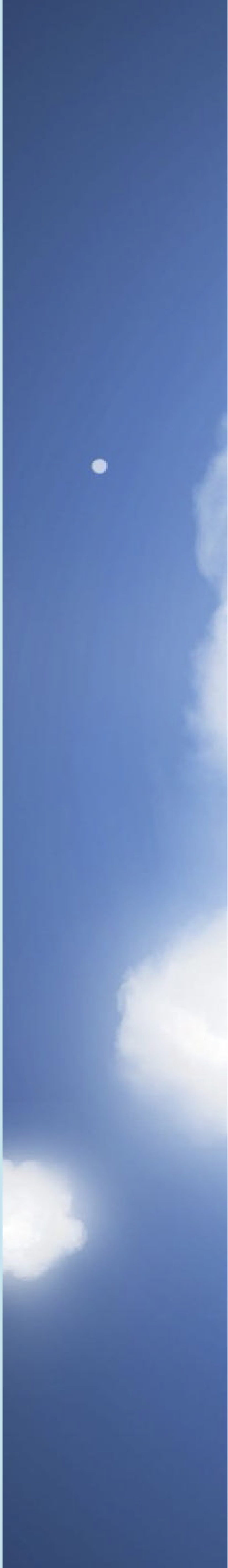
Not getting your 40 winks? Tap into the latest sleep science and get the snooze-fest you've been craving.

WORDS: JENNIFER SAVIN, EMILY PRITCHARD, KATIE AVIS-RIORDAN AND SOPHIE BOYDEN. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

You know those nights when you're staring at the ceiling, fully awake, your eyes wider than cartoon-style eyeballs? Yeah, those. So, how can you ace something that should be so simple, but often isn't? Come with us as we probe the mysterious world of sleep science. Think you know it all? You might just be surprised!

HOW LONG IS A PIECE OF SLEEP?

We all know the golden rule of eight hours a night, but, actually, it turns out one size doesn't fit all. A review of 320 research papers concluded that, while seven to nine hours of shut-eye is optimal, even less is enough for some. "Individual sleep requirements are like height," says Dr Neil Stanley, author of *How To Sleep Well*. "To a large degree, it's genetically determined and anywhere between four and 11 hours would be considered normal." He advises listening to your body when trying to figure out your personal magic number. "It's simply the amount of sleep that allows you to wake up alert and refreshed the following day," explains Dr Stanley. If you're nodding off again by mid-afternoon, try tweaking your bedtime and tracking your body's response in order to identify your sweet spot. ►



What happens when you're asleep

When it comes to your sleep activity, sleep expert Dr Sophie Bostock says there are four main stages. "A sleep cycle is made up of the body passing through three stages of non-rapid eye movement (NREM) sleep to get to REM sleep (the deeper, dream-inducing kind), before repeating all over again," she explains. Another sleepy term you need to know is 'circadian rhythm'. This is the body's natural cycle of sleep and wakefulness (changes in sunlight can disrupt it, making you sleepier in the winter than in summer due to more melatonin, known as the sleep hormone, being produced by the brain).

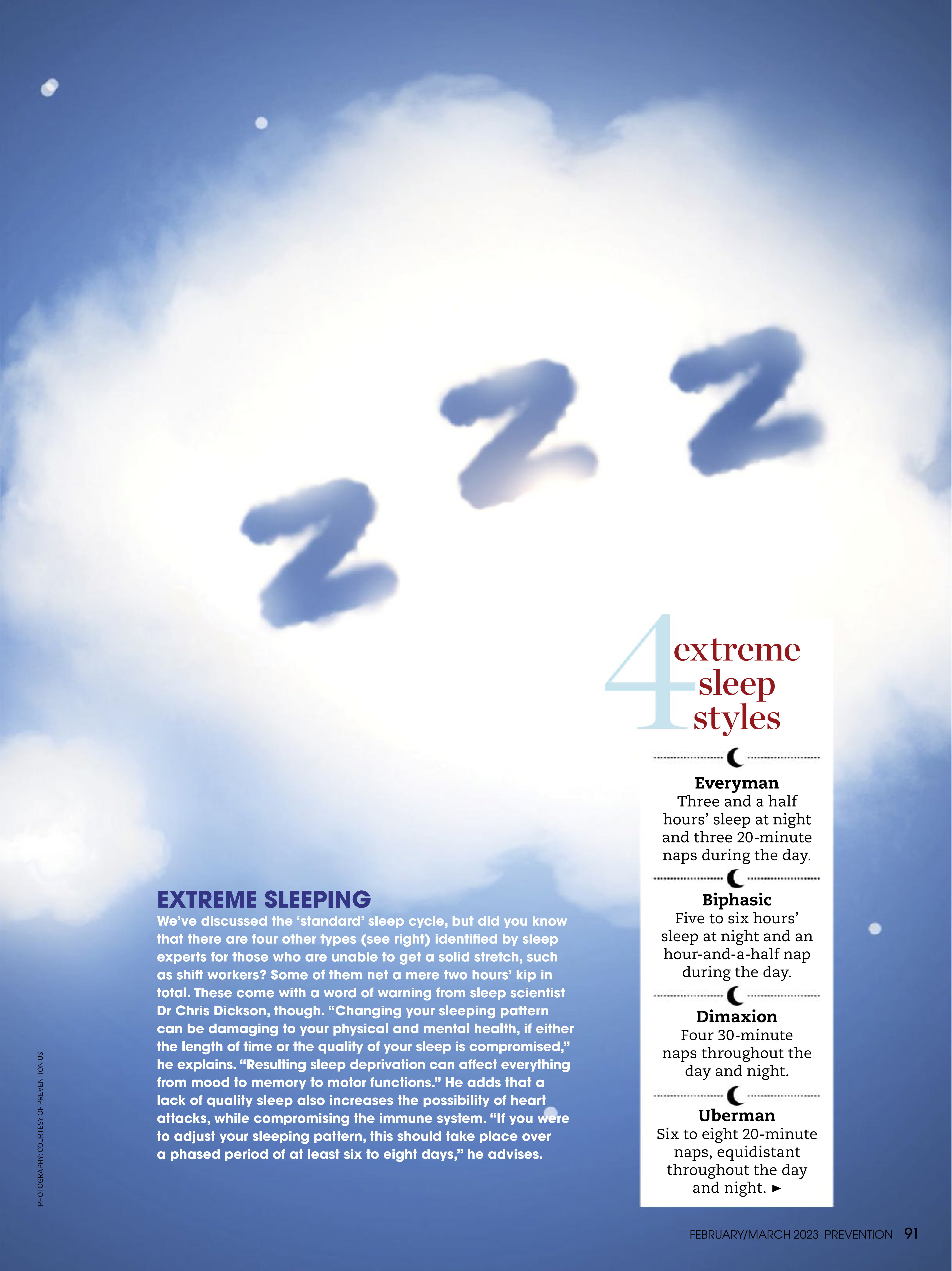
While you sleep, your brain's hard at work in one of these four stages that it cycles through multiple times each night...

★ **Stage one:** "You're just losing consciousness here – it's very easy to wake up again," says Dr Bostock. This period typically lasts for about 10 minutes or so before moving into stage two.

★ **Stage two:** This is a good one – it's the stage that scientists refer to as 'true' sleep. Your heart and breathing rates slow and your body temperature drops until you fully lose consciousness (hello, drool). "It's where you'll likely spend most of your time asleep," Dr Bostock says – between 20 to 30 minutes are often spent in this phase.

★ **Stage three:** Up next, the most physically restorative chunk of sleep, referred to as slow-wave sleep. During this time, your heart rate and respiratory rate decrease significantly and your muscles relax, too. Plus, your body works hard to secrete growth hormones from the brain and helps cells to re-energise and repair.

★ **Stage four – REM sleep:** So called because your eyes are darting about all over the shop, this phase is normally associated with dreaming and sees your brain being pretty active. And then it's back to phase one to do the cycle all over again.



EXTREME SLEEPING

We've discussed the 'standard' sleep cycle, but did you know that there are four other types (see right) identified by sleep experts for those who are unable to get a solid stretch, such as shift workers? Some of them net a mere two hours' kip in total. These come with a word of warning from sleep scientist Dr Chris Dickson, though. "Changing your sleeping pattern can be damaging to your physical and mental health, if either the length of time or the quality of your sleep is compromised," he explains. "Resulting sleep deprivation can affect everything from mood to memory to motor functions." He adds that a lack of quality sleep also increases the possibility of heart attacks, while compromising the immune system. "If you were to adjust your sleeping pattern, this should take place over a phased period of at least six to eight days," he advises.

4 extreme sleep styles

* * *

Everyman
Three and a half hours' sleep at night and three 20-minute naps during the day.

* * *

Biphasic
Five to six hours' sleep at night and an hour-and-a-half nap during the day.

* * *

Dimaxion
Four 30-minute naps throughout the day and night.

* * *

Uberman
Six to eight 20-minute naps, equidistant throughout the day and night. ►

PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF PREVENTION US

Fast fact

Lowering your body temperature is a crucial step for getting into the deep sleep phase, so invest in breathable bedding.

How to nail it in bed

Okay, so now you've got the intel, here's how to put it into action.

Calculate your window

No, we don't mean your actual window, but your sleep-restriction window: limiting the number of hours spent in bed to closely match the time you can sleep for creates a stronger drive to doze off, and improves shut-eye quality over quantity, says sleep therapist Kathryn Pinkham. "First, work out your sleep efficiency – how long you're asleep for versus how long you spend in bed in total," she adds. Divide your sleep time by the number of total hours spent in bed and multiply that by 100. For example, six hours of sleep ÷ eight hours in bed x 100 = 75%. This gives you the percentage of time you're actually asleep. The remaining 25% is how much you'll reduce your 'sleep window' by. For example, your new sleep window would be 12am–6am, spending six hours in bed for a six-hour sleep, rather than eight hours in bed for a six-hour sleep. This short-term restriction should create a stronger drive to fall asleep.

BE STRICT

Kathryn advocates being stern with your sleep window – no matter how tired you are, stay awake until your new bedtime. Sadly, no lie-ins allowed either, or naps after 3pm (or longer than 20 minutes). Use the extra hours productively, whether that's meal prepping, doing your laundry or reading a book (anything that's screen free). Reserve your bedroom solely for snoozing, too – no working, eating or especially TV in there!

Tackle anxiety

Anxiety is the enemy of sleep. It sends a 'fight or flight' message to your body that keeps you feeling alert and your heart rate up. But a new study has found that, before bed, listing tasks you need to accomplish over the coming days can help you nod off 15 minutes faster. If you're worrying about your sleep during the day, take 20 minutes to write these feelings down. "This is about getting it out of your head and onto paper to give a different perspective," says Kathryn. "It's not about suppressing anxious thoughts, but choosing when to tackle them."

TRY WEEKEND COFFEE

New research shows that more than one cup of coffee a week could lead to shrinkage of a gland in the brain that produces melatonin. Gulp. Can't face Sunday-only lattes? Then, at least try scaling back to one a day.

Be fruitful

A review in *Advances In Nutrition* concluded that cherries, which naturally contain melatonin, could be a legit insomnia helper. Participants who drank 230ml of tart cherry juice were less likely to wake in the night. Another recent Chinese study found that eating two kiwifruits before bed each night for four weeks improved sleep quality and duration.

Be realistic

People who sleep for eight hours a night don't suddenly have a perfect life, notes Kathryn. "Sleep isn't going to fix all of those things," she says. "If you're sleeping well, but you still feel tired during the day, that's because your busy lifestyle can be exhausting." She adds that it's important to acknowledge that, if you're often stressed or anxious, you may find you still feel pretty wrung out, as it's your body's way of letting you know something is wrong. Don't be hard on yourself and, if needed, reassess whether some lifestyle changes are necessary.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Friendship...

and why you need to lean into it more

Platonic love deserves as much effort and attention as the other relationships in your life, but making – and keeping – friends as an adult can be a complex task. We talk to a friendship expert to find out how.

BY ELLA DOVE

Can't live without your friends? We believe you. Research has shown that friendship is a crucial part of the human experience – and something we should all prioritise cultivating. "Psychologists theorise that our relationships, like oxygen, food or water, are necessary for us to function," says Dr Marisa G. Franco, psychologist and author of *Platonic: How Understanding Your Attachment Style Can Help You Make And Keep Friends.*

"When stripped of them, you cannot thrive, which explains why friendships powerfully influence mental and physical health. One study found the most pronounced difference between happy and unhappy people was not how attractive or religious they were or how many good things happened to them – it was their level of social connection. Scientists have found that of 106 factors that influence depression, having someone to confide in is the strongest preventer."

Unlike family or romantic partners, deep friendship, sometimes called platonic love, can be free of expectation and pressure. Dr Franco describes friendships as "tiny interventions of love and empathy and oxytocin that calm your body, keep you healthy and ready you for connection". In fact, she adds: "Having friends will make your romantic relationships better. When there's conflict with a partner or you're going through turbulent times, you experience less stress when you have friends to provide support, trust and co-operation. Friendship stabilises other relationships in your life."

THE SCIENCE OF ATTACHMENT

The way we make and keep friends has a lot to do with our attachment style. We all naturally develop one of three modes – secure, anxious or avoidant. "These styles are templates for the assumptions we have in our relationships, which affect how we show up in them," says Dr Franco.

"Anxiously attached people think others are going to abandon them, so their relationships tend to be more volatile. They might take things very personally, try to reject people before people reject them, or get vulnerable quickly in a way that can almost be overwhelming in an attempt to test the relationship and make sure the other person won't abandon them. Avoidant people make the unconscious assumption that people can't be trusted, so when you're friends with an avoidant person, you tend to feel like you don't really know them. They compartmentalise their friendships and they're not often willing to go out of their way for the relationship, because when you assume people aren't trustworthy, you become less trusting yourself.

"Conversely, securely attached people are the 'super friends', those who are completely comfortable with intimacy and give the benefit of the doubt. Their unconscious template is 'I can trust people and people like me.'" ►

> ‘Instead of assuming the friendship is over, assume that you can regain it.

Once you’ve understood your attachment style, you can work on your friendships accordingly – and you all have the power to shift your mindset towards secure attachment, says Dr Franco. “The problem with insecure attachment is we have all these assumptions: anxious people think, ‘If I reach out, you’re going to reject me,’ or avoidant people might think, ‘If I bring up this problem, you’re going to abandon me,’” she says.

“The way to correct your internal algorithm is by doing the thing that scares you to build intimacy.” Rather than allowing your triggers to guide your behaviour, try to react in a mindful way. “So, instead of withdrawing, tell yourself: ‘I know I’m afraid of being abandoned, but I might want to still take this risk,’” Dr Franco says. “This way, you begin to revise your initial reactions, which might be based on insecure attachment style, and begin to change them.”

HOW TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS

“For friendship to happen organically, we need shared vulnerability and continuous unplanned interaction, which we have as children at school, chatting and playing with friends we see every day,” explains Dr Franco. As we go into adulthood, many of us lose this. “At work, we’re often being our ‘work selves’, not letting our guard down,” she says. “Studies have found that you can spend more time together at work and feel less close – whereas if you spend time together outside of work, you feel the opposite.”

Dr Franco suggests building ‘social infrastructure’ by signing up for something that gives you continuous unplanned interaction, such as a sports club, language class or drama group. “Showing up for at least two months leads to the ‘mere exposure effect’, where seeing someone’s face regularly over time makes you unconsciously feel more connected to them.”

From there, you can generate exclusivity by asking someone in the group if they’d like to spend time one on one – for instance, having a drink before or after your shared activity. “We’re so afraid of rejection, but alleviating social anxiety goes back to assuming people like you,” Dr Franco says. “It takes initiative to deepen a friendship.”

Making friends as an adult can feel awkward – but leaning into this discomfort is part of the process. “Intimacy is risky, but it’s about working with your vulnerabilities, because a lot of your distrust is a defence mechanism,” she says. If you tend to put up a facade when meeting new people, try to slowly drop your guard and display authenticity to build connection. “Research shows that people appreciate vulnerable conversations and probing questions more than we assume they do,” says Dr Franco. “So, ask questions, maybe share how you’re feeling and what you’re currently struggling with. Authenticity will make you friends, because when you’re not burdened by fear of judgment, when you’re secure, your naturally true and good self emerges.”

SUSTAINING FRIENDSHIPS

As you grow older, maintaining friendships can be difficult. You hit life’s milestones at different times; you may get a new job, marry or have children. “We can lose touch,” says Dr Franco. “There was no ill will – we just dropped the ball.” But it’s never too late to reconnect.

“A recent study found that people appreciate a surprise text more than we think they do, especially when it’s someone they haven’t spoken to in a while.” Scroll through your phone contacts and ask yourself: are there people you wish you’d stayed closer with? “Instead of assuming the friendship is over, assume that you can regain it,” says Dr Franco. “Think of it as if the friendship is simply asleep and send that person a message. Chances are, the fear will be worth the end result.”

If you think life will get in the way, Dr Franco suggests setting a regular meeting. “Friendships often die because of coordination issues, but having a date in the diary shows you care,” she says. And if you haven’t seen a close friend in a while, don’t worry. Maintaining friendships isn’t about how much time you put in, but about the quality of time. Offering support when it’s really needed will maintain a friendship longer than a series of surface-level interactions.

Ultimately, platonic love should be flexible, not fragile. “The longer the friendship, the longer it’s likely to last,” Dr Franco says. So, trust in the strength of that bond and accept the ebbs and flows. Friendship is always worth the risk.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES; ISTOCK

HOW TO NAVIGATE CONFLICT IN A FRIENDSHIP

SIT WITH YOUR FEELINGS FIRST

In friendships, there isn't the immediacy of romantic relationships, so take advantage of this space by self-reflecting before reacting to an issue. Soothe yourself and find some perspective before approaching your friend to address the problem.

MAKE THE UNSAID SAID

A common issue in friendships is not addressing concerns head on, instead allowing the smallest thing to split you apart. Keeping your sensitivity to yourself actually harms the friendship, because the alternative is often withdrawal. Being able to learn conflict resolution skills and talk through any issues instead of letting them accumulate over time is key to maintaining a strong connection.

TREAT THE DISAGREEMENT OR FRICTION WITH LOVE

Think of the discord like a trial, without jumping to a verdict straightaway. Rather than arguing to convince each other that you're right and they're wrong, try each sharing why you've been triggered. You might just find they have an answer that completely changes your own feelings. And focus on de-escalating and reconciliation – if they display anger, try to bring in softness and compassion.

REMEMBER THAT FRIENDSHIPS HAVE DIFFERENT LEVELS

It's natural to have some friendships that are deeper than others, and you can dial down the level of intensity at any time. Ultimately, your friendships should benefit you more than they drain you.

Body confidence

BY LYNDI COHEN, AKA
THE NUDE NUTRITIONIST

Struggling to feel happy in your own skin? It's time to fight back against the inner negativity, change the way you think and show your bod the respect it deserves.

Loving your body in a world that is constantly telling you to weigh less is pretty exhausting stuff. While it's normal to have an occasional bad body image day, when every day or lots of days are bad body image days, that's when you really need to make some changes. For many of the clients I've helped over the years, hating their bodies was a daily occurrence and consumed their thoughts; it was getting in the way of self-esteem and happiness. This is not the life you deserve.

We need to have a plan for noticing bad body image thoughts. The first step is to notice the rising feeling within us, then challenge the idea that the thought, like "I'm lazy/ugly/wrong", is fact. Facts are permanent and true; this is really just a feeling, and feelings are temporary and situation dependent. Then, consider what kind act you can do for yourself to help the feeling shift. Personally, I find my mood is almost always improved by moving my body (while listening to my 'body confidence' playlist). Rather than assuming your body is the problem and the thing that needs fixing, consider what else may have caused this feeling. Too tight clothes? That's not your body's fault, but a garment problem. ►

> Accepting your body is a choice, a decision you make in spite of what your body really looks like.

To live a full life, you need to forget about any body hang-ups, says Lyndi (pictured).

I think accepting your body is a choice, a decision you make in spite of what your body really looks like. This isn't about giving up on how you look or not having pride in your appearance. The aim is to get to a point where the flatness of your stomach doesn't dictate your self-worth.

I want to be strong and feel comfortable in my body. But I don't think I could get rid of cellulite on my tush and a protective layer of fat on my stomach without sacrificing my life or getting bogged down in food obsession. This is what I need to accept in order to live a full life.

UTILISE THE MAGIC OF SELF-COMPASSION

You're already good enough. You know that deep in your bones, right? But there's also a mean girl (or person) in your head, talking crap about you, things you'd never say to anyone else. Imagine your brain as a radio: when you hear that negative voice, change the channel from self-loathing to self-acceptance, because the latter is way more fun to tune into. Do healthy things, move in a way that's enjoyable... it's freeing to know your body doesn't have to be perfect in order to be healthy.

NOTICE WHEN YOU'RE EXPERIENCING POOR BODY IMAGE

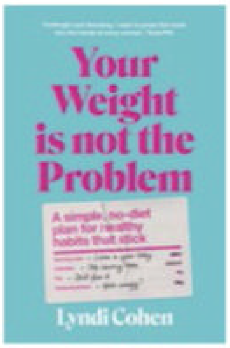
You might sense a desire to lose weight, or be sad about your body. When you start to feel your thoughts drift into self-loathing, take note of the negative self-talk pattern and try to identify what made you feel bad about your body. It could be any number of things, such as...

- Someone making a comment about your weight, or failing to comment on your weight if you were hoping they'd notice a change.
- Seeing a photo or video of yourself where you don't like how you look.
- Catching a glimpse of yourself in the reflection that you don't consider to be flattering.
- Putting on clothes that feel too tight.
- Seeing a friend, colleague or acquaintance who has recently lost weight.
- Looking at photos of beautiful people, while scrolling the internet or flicking through a mag.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES; ISTOCK; LUCA PRODIGO

AND REMEMBER...

- You don’t need to love your body, but you can choose to show it some respect, or view it neutrally and accepting that it’ll always be imperfect.
- This isn’t a reflection of your self-worth, because being pretty or thin is the least impressive thing you can do.
- Change your clothes to fit your body; don’t change your body to fit your clothes. Your wardrobe can either support you to feel good in your body or get in the way of your wellbeing. Changing your relationship with clothes may help shift your relationship with your body.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Lyndi Cohen

Edited extract from *Your Weight is Not the Problem* by Lyndi Cohen (Murdoch Books, $32.99).

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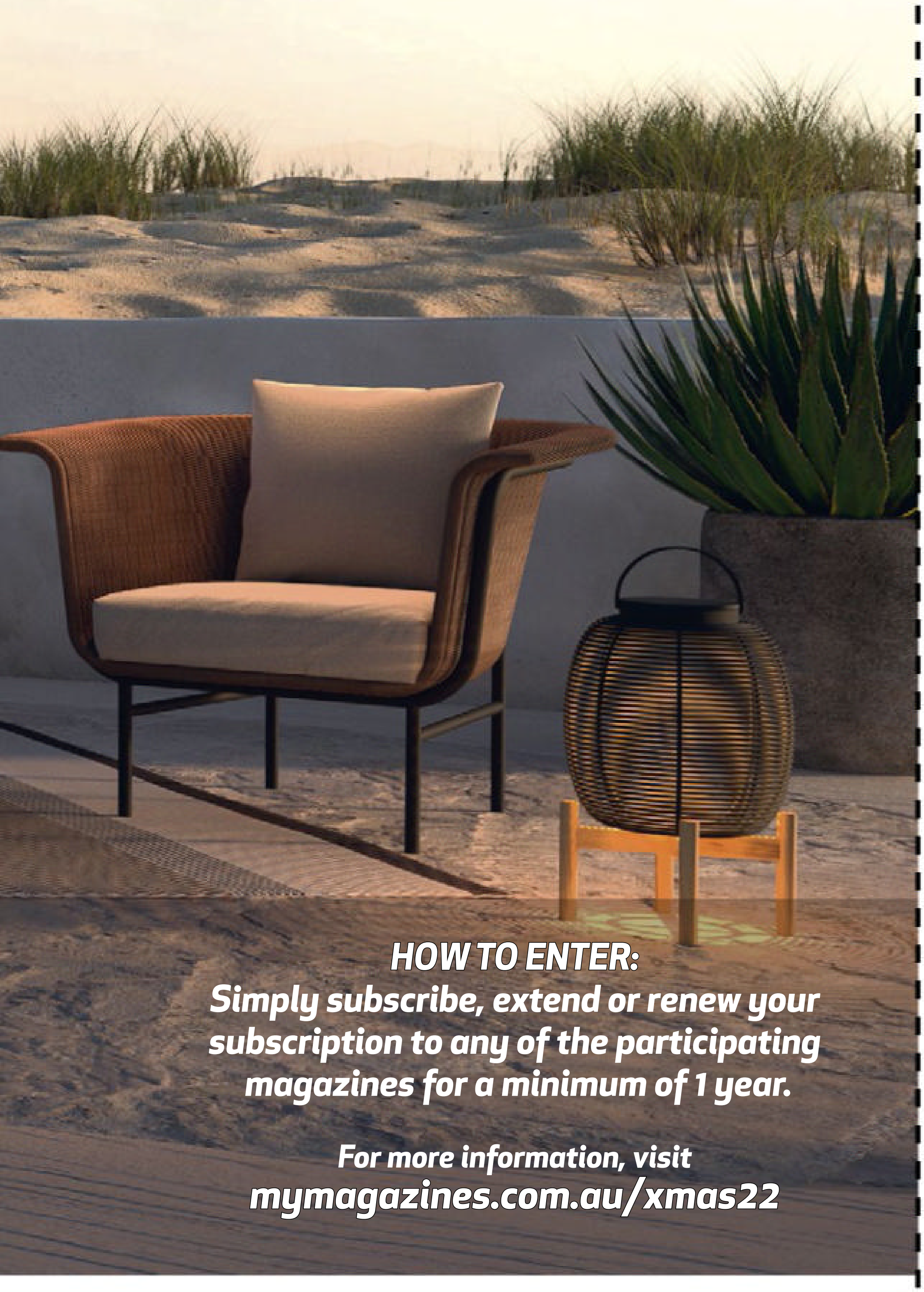

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For the moment

From Japan's ancient customs to the wilds of Canada, immerse yourself in a different way of being.

BY UTE JUNKER

How would you like to sail past frolicking sea lions on a beautiful unspoilt island or experience an ancient Japanese tea ceremony among lush gardens and towering forests? If you're dreaming of a holiday that'll stimulate your senses and live long in your memory, we have you covered. Whether you opt to submerge yourself into the traditional delights of Kyoto or get a big hit of nature in Canada's Great Bear Rainforest, these destinations are simply unforgettable. ►

Explore the nature-filled channels of Vancouver Island via boat and you may just come across a herd of playful sea lions, here in Johnstone Strait on the north-east coast.

PHOTOGRAPHY: NORTHERN VANCOUVER ISLAND TOURISM/STEVEN FINES

Go wild in **British Columbia, Canada**

This is a landscape that you want to get lost in. Cruise the waters off the northern part of Vancouver Island and you'll find yourself in a world of blue and green, where temperate rainforest tumbles all the way down to the bays and bights that scallop the island's coast. This interplay of land and sea is mirrored in the many smaller islands that form a maze-like archipelago just offshore.

As our boat powers through the channels, our guide, Jenefer Smalley from Wild Waterways Adventures (wildwaterways.com), points out plenty of passing wildlife – everything from sea otters to sea lions and even a couple of migrating humpback whales. While many travellers come to this part of British Columbia to spot the black bears and grizzly bears that roam the forests – known as the Great Bear Rainforest – the waterways are home to an equally stunning array of wildlife, all of it dependent on the salmon that fill the waters here.

For many hundreds of years, this area was also home to a vast range of tribes, including the Ligʷiłdaxʷ First Nations. Jenefer shares some of their traditional teachings with us, explaining that the people saw themselves as belonging to the wild places around them. "There is no degree of separation from nature," she says. "No indigenous language has a separate word for nature – it's all an expression of the great spirit."

Our tour isn't confined to the water. Jenefer also takes us for a forest-bathing session on one of the islands. After we've followed the path a short way into the forest, she asks us to shut our eyes and switch on our other senses. "The minute you walk into the forest, you're exposed to all kinds of medicine," she says. "Even the air you breathe is full of essential oils."

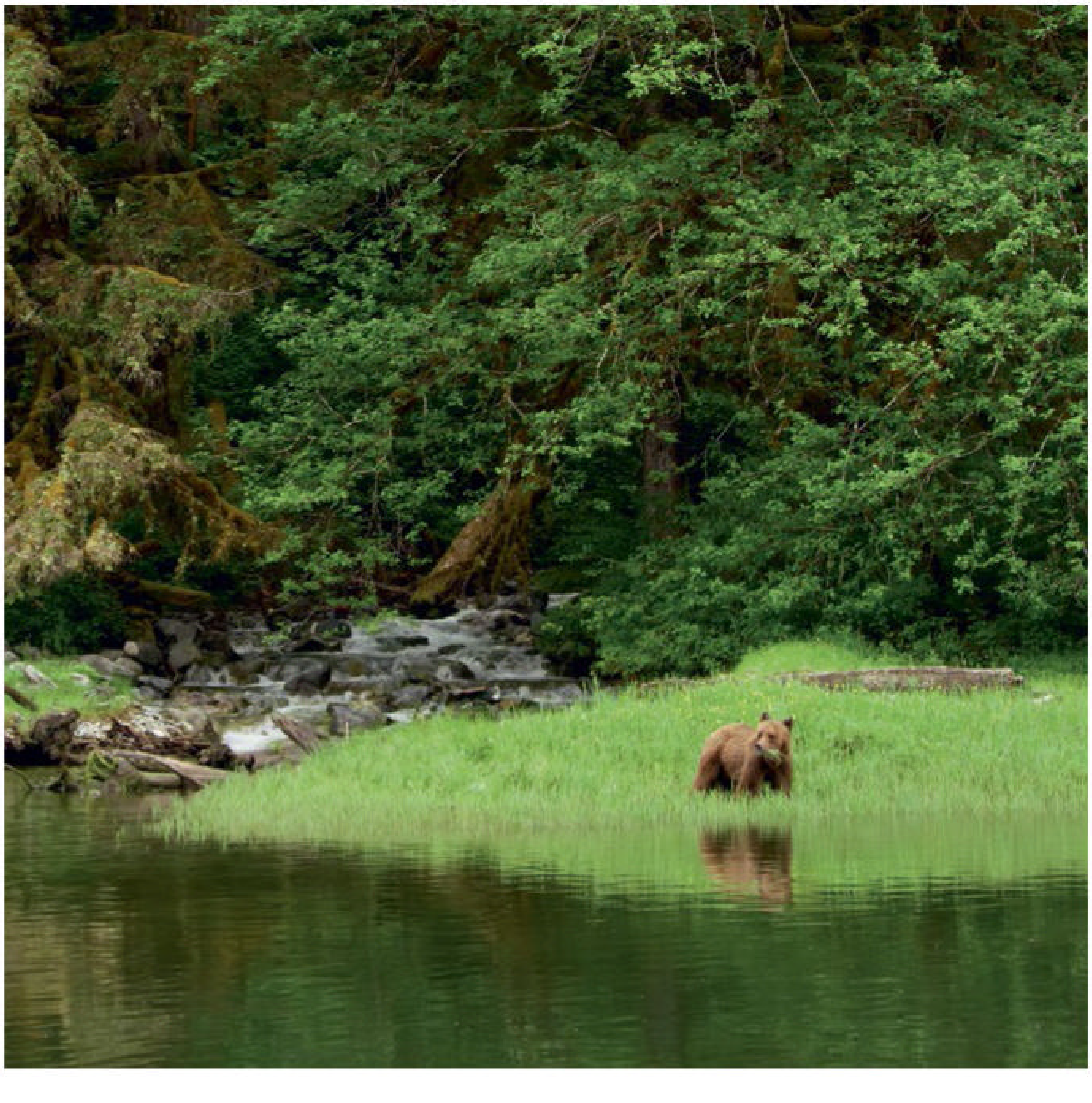
We inhale deeply, the heady scent of cedar and pine down in our lungs. As we open our eyes and step further into the forest, small details jump out at us: mushrooms growing on a fallen log, a dew-spangled spiderweb stretched between two branches, a rivulet of water skirting some moss-covered rocks.

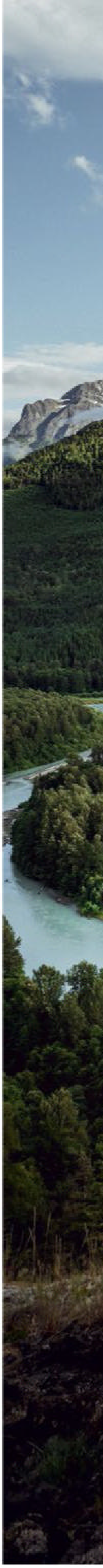
Vancouver Island is only a 90-minute ferry ride from bustling Vancouver – one of Canada's densest, most ethnically diverse cities – but a better outdoor playground is hard to imagine. If you want to really dial up the isolation, then head to the island's west coast, where the remote Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge (clayoquotwildernesslodge.com) sits almost invisible at the end of a secluded sound, accessible only by boat or seaplane. At this tented camp, you can paddleboard on the bay, horseback ride through the forest or take a wildlife-watching cruise.

"I like to call this a sea-to-sky experience," says lodge manager Sarah Cruse. "You can start your day in the ocean and end it up on the mountain, and it's your choice as to how extreme you go."

A big believer in the restorative effects of nature, Sarah says that many guests are also exhilarated by the opportunity to push their limits and try something new. "A lot of people are out of their element in a place that's this off-grid and remote," she says. "Just flying in on that seaplane and landing at the dock – many people have never done that before in their life."

For all the thrills on offer, my favourite memory is an easy hike through the lush forest. Along the way, we climb onto massive fallen cedars that we use as our personal highways, and wade across a crystal-clear river. It's a bracing experience – the waters are fed by the snowmelt from the glaciers high above – but as tiny salmon dart past my feet, I feel completely connected to nature. ►





PHOTOGRAPHY: DESTINATION BRITISH COLUMBIA; JESAJA CLASS PHOTOGRAPHY

Take a *via ferrata* nature walk in British Columbia's magnificent Bella Coola Valley, where you'll cherish the views of Stupendous Mountain and the Bella Coola River. **Opposite:** Keep your camera handy, as you may just spot a grizzly bear or two eating sedge grass near the shore in the Great Bear Rainforest.

Relax in one of Kyoto's many verdant traditional gardens. **Opposite, from top:** Wander through the tunnel of orange torii gates at Fushimi Inari-taisha shrine in Fushimi-ku, Kyoto; historical finds await on characterful, stone-paved Sannenzaka street.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (RIGHT PAGE, CENTRE) S. YUKIYA

Take it slow in *Kyoto, Japan*

The room isn't completely silent, but the soft sounds – the whisper of the bamboo whisk as it brushes the side of the ceramic teacup, the gentle hum of steam rising from the cast iron tea pot – provide a soundtrack that's more soothing than absolute stillness. As I watch my host conduct the ancient ritual of the Japanese tea ceremony, each graceful movement practised a thousand times over, it's clear that this custom is about much more than just quenching your thirst.

"The tea room is a sacred space where the goal is to relax, to enjoy living in the moment," Atsuko Mori says. From a 100-year-old townhouse in a quiet Kyoto neighbourhood, Atsuko runs Camellia Tea Ceremony (tea-kyoto.com), giving her guests insights into how the Japanese savour their cup of matcha tea. "It's a form of meditation," she says. "It's about engaging your senses, enjoying the smell of the tea and every small sound. It's like a slow dance. Everything's in flow."

Slowing down to appreciate the details is what a holiday in Kyoto is all about. In Kyoto, the imperial capital of Japan for more than 1000 years, life unfolds very differently to the fast-moving, neon-lit lifestyle of Tokyo. This is a city that has a respect for the past, that celebrates continuity and tradition. Locals regularly visit the city's astounding collection of Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples (there are more than 1600 to pick from), each one a place of serene beauty. Instead of trying to tick as many as possible off your list, add just a few to your itinerary and explore them at your leisure so you can appreciate all their intricate details.

Fushimi Inari-taisha shrine, for instance, is known for the paths that wind through the shrine's thousands of flaming orange torii gates. Less well-known but just as atmospheric is a quiet spot that ►

Left: Take part in an ancient Japanese tea ceremony, where you'll not only enjoy matcha tea at its finest (and seasonal sweets), but also learn the basics of tea making, guided by an expert instructor.

most visitors miss: a nearby slope covered in ancient moss-draped stone shrines, where stray cats watch visitors warily.

Sometimes it's the stories behind the buildings that enchant. The sprawling Ninna-ji temple, for example, becomes one of my favourites after my guide explains that the emperor who founded it used to write passionate poetry extolling the beauty of his cat. "He was the first cat blogger," she says.

For such an ancient city, Kyoto is remarkably rich in green spaces. The towering Sagano Bamboo Forest is spectacular, while the city's many gardens – constructed to a complex formula that balances different elements including stone, water and plants – are a fabulous place to decompress. Some of the loveliest gardens belong to shrines and temples, such as Ginkaku-ji or Saiho-ji, but you'll find eye-catching greenery everywhere. Even my hotel, the Hotel Seiryu Kyoto Kiyomizu (seiryukiyomizu.com), is set amid tranquil plantings.

The narrow streets of Kyoto's historic neighbourhoods also have lots to explore, from popular areas like Gion to less famous destinations such as the delightful Sannenzaka street. These locales are where you'll find the workshops of the Kyoto artisans keeping the old ways alive. Whether you want to watch a master craftsperson hard at work or give it a try yourself, Kyoto Artisan Concierge (kyotoartisans.jp/en) can organise visits to ceramicists, lacquerware makers, even candle makers.

Among Kyoto's most revered traditions is its cuisine. If you're after a quick bite to eat, the mouth-watering Nishiki food market is a must. But, to appreciate the heights of culinary artistry, a multi-course kaiseki meal is the way to go.

At Kyoryori Manshige (kyoryori-manshige.co.jp/en), run by the same family for nearly 90 years, we savour the delights of a kaiseki meal, a multi-course feast that follows a set formula, with dishes including sashimi, hotpots and tempura, all tailored to the season.

More than just using seasonal ingredients, every element of the meal – from the colour of the crockery to the leaves and flowers used as garnish – relates back to the time of year. In our lunch, bowls featuring a sweep of gold leaf pay tribute to the full moon that has just happened. Just like the tea ceremony, a kaiseki meal is also about appreciation, about paying attention to the sights, sounds and textures of the food so as to fully enjoy the experience. **P**

From top: Atsuko Mori, from Camellia Tea Ceremony, prepares a traditional tea ceremony; pick up some souvenirs and treats on an evening walk along Sannenzaka.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (LEFT PAGE, TOP) JEFFREY FRIEDL

Amble around the charming gardens, dotted with gorgeous cherry blossom trees, at Heian-jingu shrine before marvelling at the structure's ornate architecture.

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AUSTRALIAN healthyfood GUIDE

NUTRITIOUS & DELICIOUS

food

Healthy eating made easy

Chargrilled chilli squid with rocket salad (page 124)

On the menu this month ...

114
So-easy light classics with a healthy twist.

120
Nutritious, low-carb barbie meals to savour.

Light breeze

Looking for some light, flavoursome meals for those warm summer nights? These classics with a healthy twist will hit the spot – and they're a cinch to make, too.

CHICKEN & VEGETABLE NOODLE BOWL

SERVES 4 **HANDS-ON TIME** 15 MINUTES
COOK TIME 10 MINUTES

2 teaspoons finely grated fresh ginger
350g skinless chicken breasts, thinly sliced
4 cups salt-reduced chicken stock
1 large carrot, shredded
1 red capsicum, thinly sliced
6 spring onions, thinly sliced
45g frozen shelled edamame
3 cups baby spinach leaves
180g packet shelf-fresh soba noodles
¼ cup ponzu sauce
1 teaspoon sesame oil
½ cup fresh coriander leaves
Lime wedges, to serve

1. Lightly spray a large saucepan with oil and heat over medium-high heat. Cook ginger, stirring, for 30 seconds or until fragrant. Add chicken and cook, stirring, for 3 minutes or until just cooked.
2. Stir in stock, carrot, capsicum, spring onions and edamame. Bring to the boil.
3. Stir in spinach, noodles and sauce. Simmer, uncovered, for 2 minutes or until heated through. Remove from heat and stir in oil. Serve with coriander leaves and lime wedges.

NUTRITION *(per serve) 1705kJ/408cals. Protein 29.3g. Carbs 43.4g. Sat fat 1.1g. Fibre 6.5g. Sodium 1593mg* ►

Thai basil is rich in vitamin A – beneficial for healthy eyes and skin.

PAD KRAPOW (THAI BASIL CHICKEN)
Recipe on page 118

ZUCCHINI, LEMON & FETA RISOTTO

Recipe on page 118

PAD KRAPOW (THAI BASIL CHICKEN)

SERVES 4 **HANDS-ON TIME** 15 MINUTES
COOK TIME 15 MINUTES

1 tablespoon sunflower oil
1 brown onion, thinly sliced
3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
3 small fresh red chillies, deseeded, thinly sliced, plus extra, to serve
500g chicken breast mince
200g green beans, cut into 4cm lengths
1 red capsicum, chopped
2 tablespoons reduced-salt soy sauce or tamari
1 tablespoon fish sauce
2 teaspoons honey
⅓ cup salt-reduced chicken stock
½ cup fresh Thai basil leaves, plus extra, to serve
4 eggs

1. Heat oil in a large wok over high heat. Stir-fry onion, garlic and chilli for 1–2 minutes or until light golden. Add mince and stir-fry, breaking up lumps, for 2 minutes or until no longer pink. Add beans and capsicum. Stir-fry for 2 minutes or until vegetables are just tender.
2. Add sauces and honey and stir-fry for 1 minute, then stir in stock. Simmer for 4 minutes or until liquid has reduced and thickened slightly. Add basil and stir-fry until just wilted.
3. Meanwhile, half fill a large frying pan with water, add a pinch of salt and bring to a simmer. Carefully crack 1 egg into a cup and slide into water. Repeat with remaining eggs. Poach eggs gently for 2–3 minutes or until whites are set and yolks are cooked to your liking.
4. Divide stir-fry among four bowls. Top each serving with a poached egg. Serve sprinkled with extra basil and chilli.

NUTRITION *(per serve) 1413kJ/338cals. Protein 33.5g. Carbs 12.2g. Sat fat 3.8g. Fibre 5.2g. Sodium 1072mg*

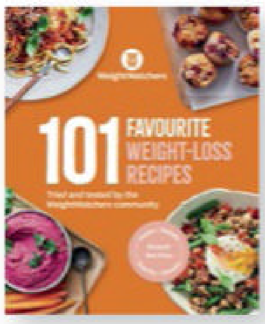
ZUCCHINI, LEMON & FETA RISOTTO

SERVES 4 **HANDS-ON TIME** 20 MINUTES
COOK TIME 35 MINUTES

4 large zucchinis
1 brown onion, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 cup arborio rice
5 cups hot vegetable stock, made with 1 gluten-free stock cube
2 spring onions, thinly sliced
2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 heaped tablespoon grated parmesan cheese
⅓ cup finely shredded fresh basil leaves
1 cup watercress leaves, to serve
40g reduced-fat feta cheese, crumbled, to serve

1. Preheat oven to 200°C. Line a large baking tray with baking paper. Cut 3 zucchinis into 2cm pieces and coarsely grate the remaining zucchini. Place chopped zucchini on prepared tray and lightly spray with oil. Season with a little salt and pepper. Bake for 20–25 minutes or until tender and golden.
2. Meanwhile, lightly spray a large non-stick frying pan with oil and heat over low heat. Cook onion, stirring, for 10 minutes or until soft, adding a little water if needed to prevent onions sticking to pan. Add garlic and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes or until fragrant. Increase heat to medium, add rice and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes. Add stock a ladleful at a time and simmer, stirring continuously until liquid has been absorbed, before adding the next ladleful.
3. After 15 minutes, stir in grated zucchini and continue to cook, stirring, until all the stock is used and rice is creamy and tender.
4. Remove risotto from heat. Stir in roasted zucchini, spring onions, zest and juice, parmesan and basil. Season with salt and pepper and stand, covered, for 2 minutes. Serve risotto topped with watercress and feta.

NUTRITION *(per serve) 1333kJ/319cals. Protein 12.3g. Carbs 48.7g. Sat fat 2.3g. Fibre 6g. Sodium 417mg*



Edited extract from WeightWatchers *101 Favourite Weight-Loss Recipes* (Macmillan Australia, $39.99). Photography by WeightWatchers International, Inc & Jeremy Simons.

MELT-IN-THE-MIDDLE FISH CAKES

SERVES 4 **HANDS-ON TIME** 20 MINUTES
COOK TIME 55 MINUTES

500g potatoes, peeled, chopped
⅓ cup frozen peas, thawed
200g cooked skinless salmon fillet, flaked
2 teaspoons chopped fresh chives
40g light tasty cheese, cut into 4 pieces
¼ cup plain flour
1 egg, lightly beaten
½ cup panko breadcrumbs
100g mixed salad leaves, to serve
Lemon wedges, to serve

Pumpkin chips
800g butternut pumpkin, peeled, cut into 1cm-thick chips

1. Cook potatoes in a large saucepan of boiling water for 15–20 minutes or until tender. Drain, then mash in a bowl until smooth. Set aside.
2. Preheat oven to 200°C. Line a large baking tray with baking paper. To cook the pumpkin chips, place chips on prepared tray in a single layer and lightly spray with oil. Bake for 30–35 minutes, turning halfway, or until golden and tender.
3. Meanwhile, add peas, salmon and chives to potato mash. Season with salt and pepper and stir to combine. Divide mixture into 4 even portions and shape into 3cm-thick patties. Push a piece of cheese into the middle of each fish cake. Place flour, egg and panko into 3 separate bowls. Working with one at a time, dust fish cakes with flour, dip into egg, then coat with panko.
4. Lightly spray a large non-stick frying pan with oil. Cook fish cakes for 2 minutes on each side or until lightly browned. Transfer to a baking tray and bake for 10 minutes or until golden. Serve with pumpkin chips, salad and lemon wedges.
Tip: You can store the fish cakes in a reusable container for the next day. Simply reheat in a 160°C oven on a baking paper-lined baking tray until hot in centre. Or freeze for up to 2 months. Reheat from frozen, as above, until hot in centre.

NUTRITION *(per serve) 1962kJ/469cals. Protein 29.8g. Carbs 43.3g. Sat fat 4.5g. Fibre 8g. Sodium 178mg*

It's sizzling outside

Set up that backyard table and fire up the barbecue because it's time for some nutritious, low-carb grilling.

CHICKEN WITH CHIMICHURRI SAUCE

SERVES 4 **HANDS-ON TIME** 30 MINUTES, PLUS 20 MINUTES TO 24 HOURS MARINATING **COOK TIME** 15 MINUTES

2 x 300g chicken breast fillets, visible fat removed, sliced in half horizontally to make 4 thin steaks
3 zucchinis, sliced lengthways

Chimichurri sauce
½ cup finely chopped oregano
1 bunch flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped
5 cloves garlic, crushed
1 teaspoon sweet paprika
½ teaspoon ground cumin
Pinch dried chilli flakes
¼ cup red wine vinegar
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Tomato salad
500g tomatoes, cut into wedges
½ small red onion, thinly sliced
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1. To make the chimichurri sauce, place all the ingredients in a food processor and blitz for 2 minutes or until finely chopped and well combined. Let sit for 20 minutes, or overnight, in the fridge to allow the flavours to develop.
2. To make the tomato salad, place all the ingredients in a bowl and toss to combine. Set aside to marinate.
3. Place half the chimichurri sauce in a large bowl with the chicken steaks and toss to coat.
4. Preheat a barbecue grill plate to high or a chargrill pan on the stovetop over high heat. Cook chicken steaks for 4 minutes on each side, or until cooked through and charred. Set aside to rest, loosely covered with foil. Add zucchini slices to barbecue or pan and cook for 2 minutes on each side until charred and softened.
5. Divide the chicken, zucchini and tomato salad between four plates, spoon over the remaining chimichurri sauce and serve.

NUTRITION *(per serve) 1449kJ/347cals. Protein 36.7g. Carbs 7.7g. Sat fat 3g. Fibre 5.5g. Sodium 86mg* ►

ECOLOGY

CHARGRILLED CHILLI SQUID WITH ROCKET SALAD

Recipe on page 124

BARBECUE JERK CHICKEN & MARINATED TOMATOES

Recipe on page 124

CHARGRILLED CHILLI SQUID WITH ROCKET SALAD

SERVES 4 **HANDS-ON TIME** 15 MINUTES
COOK TIME 15 MINUTES

600g cleaned squid hoods (see tip, right)
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
Juice of 1 lemon
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 teaspoon dried chilli flakes
6 roma tomatoes, halved
1 small red onion, cut into 8 wedges
½ cup flat-leaf parsley leaves
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
1½ tablespoons oil-based basil pesto

Rocket salad
4 cups rocket leaves
2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon white wine vinegar

1. Preheat a barbecue flat plate to high or heat a chargrill pan on the stovetop over high heat.
2. Slice the squid hoods open, then lightly score the front and back with small knife strokes – this makes the squid cook more evenly. Chop the squid into 3cm lengths and place it in a bowl.
3. Add half the olive oil, half the lemon juice, the garlic, some freshly ground black pepper, to taste, and the chilli flakes to the bowl and toss until the squid is well coated.
4. When the barbecue or chargrill pan is hot, place the tomato and onion in a bowl with the remaining olive oil, toss to coat, and then place the tomato and onion directly on the grill (or in the pan), cut-side down. Cook for 5 minutes, turning as they char, or until softened. Add to a large bowl with the remaining lemon juice, the parsley, red wine vinegar and pesto. Toss to combine and allow to marinate.
5. Place the squid on the barbecue plate or chargrill pan and cook for 1–2 minutes on each side until curled up and no longer translucent.
6. To make the rocket salad, place all the ingredients in a bowl and toss to combine.
7. Divide the squid between four bowls, along with the tomato, onion and rocket salad and serve.
Tip: Buy white, cleaned squid hoods, or ask your fishmonger to gut and clean them for you. Also, as this is a very low-kilojoule meal, you may like to serve it with wholegrain rolls.

NUTRITION *(per serve) 1198kJ/287cals. Protein 30.3g. Carbs 6.5g. Sat fat 2.3g. Fibre 5.6g. Sodium 508mg*

BARBECUE JERK CHICKEN AND MARINATED TOMATOES

SERVES 6 **HANDS-ON TIME** 15 MINUTES
COOK TIME 30 MINUTES

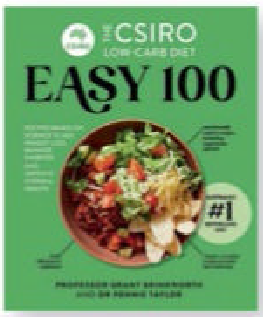
1½ tablespoons dried thyme
1 teaspoon ground allspice
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
4 cloves garlic, crushed
Juice of 1 lime
1 x 1.5kg chicken, butterflied, skin removed
1 teaspoon olive oil

Marinated tomatoes
500g truss tomatoes, chopped
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
1 clove garlic, crushed
Pinch dried chilli flakes

Corn and avocado salad
2 corn cobs, husks and silks removed
1 small avocado, sliced
4 cups cos lettuce leaves
¼ cup roughly chopped mint leaves
¼ cup roughly chopped basil leaves
2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
¼ cup reduced fat natural yoghurt

1. Preheat a barbecue grill plate to high, or preheat the oven to 220°C.
2. Place the thyme, allspice, cinnamon, cayenne pepper, garlic, lime juice and some freshly ground black pepper, to taste, in a small bowl and mix until combined into a thick paste.
3. Massage the paste into the butterflied chicken, then drizzle with the olive oil.
4. For the marinated tomatoes, place all the ingredients in a large bowl and toss to combine.
5. Place the chicken on the barbecue grill, or in the oven, with the tomatoes and one of the corn cobs. Cook the chicken for 15 minutes on each side and the corn for 6 minutes, turning the chicken once and the corn regularly. Once cooked, set the chicken and tomatoes aside to rest.
6. Once cool enough to handle, slice the kernels off the grilled corn cob using a sharp knife, and also off the uncooked corn cob (the raw corn adds a great texture and freshness to the salad).
7. To make the corn and avocado salad, place the corn kernels in a bowl with the avocado, lettuce, mint and basil. To make a dressing, combine the olive oil, vinegar and yoghurt in a small bowl and mix well. Drizzle the dressing over the salad.
8. Carve the chicken into pieces and serve with the marinated tomatoes and corn and avocado salad.

NUTRITION *(per serve) 2325kJ/556cals. Protein 70.5g. Carbs 12.5g. Sat fat 5.4g. Fibre 7.1g. Sodium 655mg*



Edited extract from *The CSIRO Low-Carb Diet Easy 100* by Professor Grant Brinkworth and Dr Pennie Taylor (Macmillan, $39.99). Photography by Jeremy Simons and Rob Palmer.

TANDOORI TOFU SKEWERS WITH HERBY YOGHURT

SERVES 4 **HANDS-ON TIME** 20 MINUTES, PLUS UP TO 24 HOURS MARINATING
COOK TIME 15 MINUTES

2 tablespoons tandoori curry paste in oil
1 tablespoon tomato paste (with no added sugar or salt)
⅓ cup natural yoghurt
600g firm tofu, cut into 3cm dice
½ head cauliflower, florets chopped into 4cm chunks
1 bunch broccolini, trimmed
8 stainless steel skewers, or wooden skewers soaked in water for 10 minutes

Pickled onion
1 small red onion, very thinly sliced
⅓ cup white vinegar

Herby yoghurt
1 cup natural yoghurt
1 bunch coriander, washed well, roots sliced off
1 cup baby spinach leaves
Juice of ½ lemon
1 small clove garlic, crushed
½ teaspoon ground cumin

Chilli peanut cucumbers
1 large continental cucumber, sliced in half lengthways, seeded and cut into 5mm half moons
Juice of 2 limes
¼ teaspoon dried chilli flakes
2 tablespoons peanuts, crushed

1. Place the tandoori curry paste, tomato paste and yoghurt in a large bowl and mix to combine. Add the tofu, cauliflower and broccolini and toss gently to coat, being careful not to crumble the tofu. If you have time, set aside to marinate for up to 24 hours in the fridge.
2. Thread the tofu onto the skewers, about four per skewer, leaving the vegies in the bowl.
3. To make the pickled onion, place the onion in a bowl and cover with the vinegar. Allow to sit for 10 minutes, tossing occasionally, or until bright pink and softened. Drain the onion and place in a small serving bowl.
4. For the herby yoghurt, place all the ingredients in an upright blender or food processor and blitz until smooth and well combined. Pour into a small serving bowl and set aside.
5. For the chilli peanut cucumbers, place the cucumber, lime juice and chilli flakes in a serving bowl and toss to combine well, then scatter on the peanuts.
6. Preheat a barbecue chargrill plate to high. Add the tofu skewers, cauliflower florets and broccolini and cook for about 10 minutes, turning every few minutes, or until the tofu is charred and the cauliflower and broccolini are tender and cooked through. (Alternatively, cook in a 200°C oven for 10–15 minutes.)
7. Serve the tandoori tofu skewers, cauliflower and broccolini in the middle of the table with the pickled onions, chilli peanut cucumbers and the herby yoghurt. Dig in and enjoy!

NUTRITION *(per serve) 1706kJ/408cals. Protein 30.1g. Carbs 21.2g. Sat fat 4g. Fibre 13.1g. Sodium 605mg*

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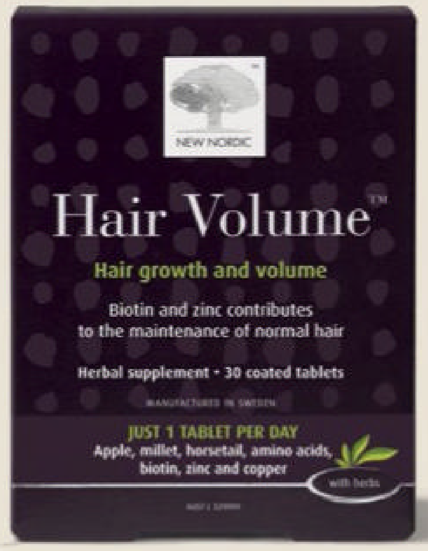
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Cat scan

Want to keep your feline buddy in good health and problem free? Here's what to look out for.

BY LIZZ SCHUMER

Cats may be low maintenance, but they still need to be monitored closely. Here, experts offer advice for dealing with common difficulties experienced by our feline friends as they age, from dehydration to tooth decay.

LITTER BOX WOES

If your cat isn't using their box properly, first bring them to the vet to be sure it's not a medical problem, such as a urinary tract infection, recommends Pam Johnson-Bennett, a certified cat behaviour consultant. Once you've ruled that out, make sure the box is kept clean and in a quiet, convenient spot. Some cats dislike covered boxes or prefer certain types of litter, so try taking the lid off or offer an additional box with a different kind of litter. And place a litter mat in front of the box to keep litter from getting all over the house, advises veterinarian Dr Ilona Rodan.

SCRATCHING ISSUES

If your cat uses a piece of furniture instead of a cat tree as a scratching post, look at the fabric and the location of both. "Scratching has many important functions for cats, including spreading their scent and making visible scratches," explains Dr Rodan. "Cats often choose the most prominent piece of furniture, one near where they wake up or one close to an outside door." Try moving a scratching post close to the furniture they tend to scratch, or get one that has a fabric similar to that of their favourite target. All cats should also have their nails trimmed about once a month.

PILL PROBLEMS

To make giving medication easier, try using soft treat pill packets. First feed your cat a little bit of a soft treat packet without medicine, then give them the packet with the pill in it. Finally, offer another soft treat as a reward. But don't hide medicine in their regular food, Pam cautions – cats' sensitive noses will sniff that out, and it just might put them off their food altogether.

> *Many cats prefer their food and water separate, so avoid using connected bowls.*

DENTAL DILEMMAS

“Not only can cats get tartar, gingivitis and fractured teeth, but they also are more prone to having resorptive lesions, or holes in the teeth that cause pain,” explains Dr Rodan. Get your cat used to having their mouth area touched when they’re young. Start by running your finger along their teeth and gums, then work up to using a soft baby toothbrush or a cat-specific one. Always use cat toothpaste, as the human kind can irritate their mouth and oesophagus. All cats should have their teeth examined by a vet at their annual check-up.

HYDRATION CONCERNS

Some cats don’t drink enough, so both experts recommend feeding them wet food, which is 80 to 90 per cent water, to help them stay hydrated. Many cats prefer their food and water separate, so Pam recommends avoiding connected bowls. Instead, provide plenty of fresh water in various places around the house. If they turn up their nose at bowls of water, try using a cat water fountain instead.

FEEDING FRENZY

“Cats are most active at dusk and at dawn,” Pam says. “It’s not uncommon for a cat to get impatient in the morning.” Instead of reinforcing annoying behaviour by putting food in their bowl to quiet them down, Dr Rodan recommends puzzle feeders. They engage a cat’s natural hunting instinct and keep them from associating food directly with their owner.

BONDING WITH YOUR LITTLE FUR BABY

Watch for relaxed ears and tail, undilated pupils and the showing of their belly as signs that your cat wants to engage. Never creep up on them or force them to interact. “Cats have preferred areas of touch, which are between the ears and eyes, where the fur is often thinner; over the cheeks; around the corners of the mouth and behind the whiskers; and the chin,” explains Dr Rodan. “These areas have glands that produce pheromones, or chemical messages, that help them feel safer. Avoid touching above the tail base and on their feet.” Cats also thrive with consistency. Keep to routine feeding, litter box cleaning and playtime and you’ll form a mutually rewarding bond that lasts.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Susie Burrell

The dietitian, psychologist and author shares what she's learnt about life.

1 **MY NON-NEGOTIABLE MORNING RITUAL IS...** coffee, coffee, coffee! It's the highlight of my day, which is either sad or fantastic. Extra hot skim latte with a half [teaspoon of sugar].

2 **WHEN I'M INVITED TO DINNER, THE HOST USUALLY...** is another dietitian, so [I know that what's served] is not an issue, or one of my close friends, in which case, they're much more interested in what champagne I'm bringing!

3 **WHAT'S INSPIRING ME RIGHT NOW IS...** seeing so many working women and mothers who literally have to 'do it all' yet do it with grace every day.

4 **I'M HAPPIEST WHEN...** I'm with my seven-year-old twins, Gus and Harry, who are the light of my life.

5 **THE LIFE LESSON I'D SHARE WITH MY 21-YEAR-OLD SELF IS...** when people show you who they really are, don't waste precious time – move on.

6 **WHAT I LOVE MOST ABOUT GETTING OLDER IS...** that people who once bothered me become less and less significant.

7 **FOR ME, 'HEALTHY' MEANS...** having a diet with a strong foundation of fresh food, regular exercise and life balance.

8 **I BELIEVE IT'S ALWAYS GOOD MANNERS TO...** bring a gift with you when you visit someone.

9 **I LIKE TO SURROUND MYSELF WITH PEOPLE WHO...** have similar energy levels to me.

10 **I DON'T LEAVE THE HOUSE WITHOUT MY...** volume powder, because my hair is very fine! P

Listen to Susie's podcast, The Nutrition Couch, wherever you get your podcasts.

COMPILED BY ANDREA DUVALL

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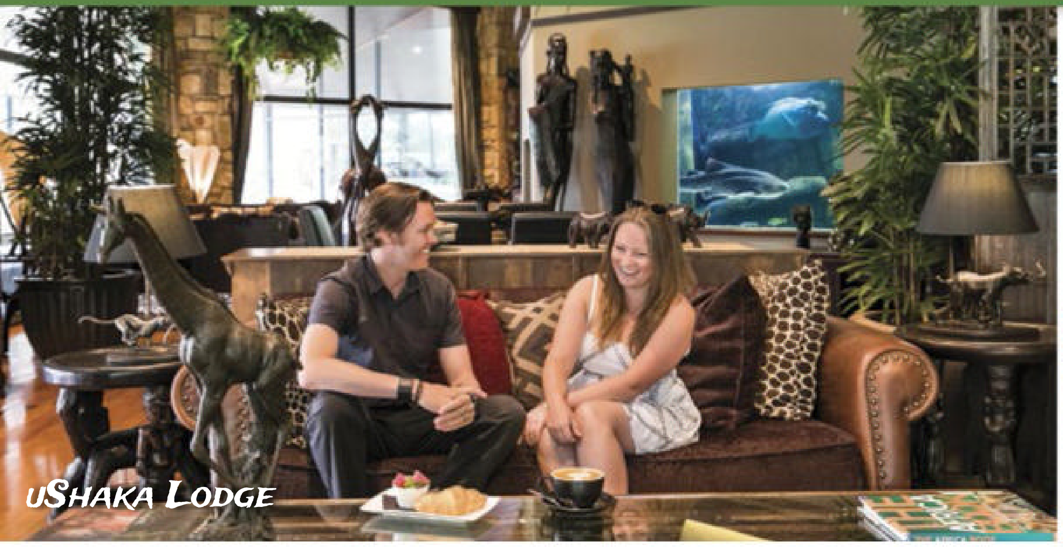

GIRAFFE TREEHOUSE

Jamala Wildlife Lodge, located in the heart of Canberra, invites guests to immerse themselves in one of the most unique experiences in the world. Sleep next to a lion, bathe next to a tiger or sun bear, feed a giraffe from your balcony or gaze into a 70,000 litre ocean fish tank in your room. Jamala creates a truly unforgettable memory. The 22-hour stay includes overnight accommodation, a 4 course African inspired dining experience, as well as an exclusive tour of the National Zoo & Aquarium.

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